THE

NOVICE;

OR,

THE MAN OF INTEGRITY.

FROM THE FRENCH OF

L. B. PICARD,

AUTHOR OF THE GIL BLAS OF THE REVOLUTION,
&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAP. I.

SCHOOL BOY DAYS.

THERE was, in the year 1802, at the central school at Orleans, a youth of seventeen, named George Dercy, quite an unsuspecting good creature, whom almost all his companions and school-fellows, some of the teachers, and even the servants of the establishment, used to call the *Niais*, or Simpleton. This lad was the only son of an honest farmer, who, after labouring in the service of others, had at length, by dint of labour and economy, contrived to render him-

self the proprietor of a small farm. On his first arrival George, with the utmost simplicity, told every body that the name of Simpleton had been bestowed upon him from his very infancy by his uncle, his aunt, his cousins, and by all his relations, with the exception of his parents. "Never mind," used his father to say good-humouredly, whenever he heard the lad joked, "I had rather that he should be called simple than crafty." "My George," his mother would observe, who was rather vexed on such occasions, "if he deserves any name of the kind, ought to be called the *bon enfant*." How was it possible but that his companions should amuse themselves at our good George's expense, by continuing to apply the unfortunate nick-name? Scarcely had he received his little allowance of pocket money before he expended it in charity to beggars, or in presents to his friends; so that when the boys clubbed together for any diversion, he had not a

penny remaining to contribute for any such purpose. Some score of times too did he suffer himself to be punished for faults committed by others, and because he would not inform against the real culprit.

How many tricks were played him, more especially by a lad of the name of Dauvert, with whom he was nevertheless upon the best terms! This Dauvert was the son of a gentleman of Touraine, who had been a little both of the politician and the gamester; had emigrated and returned again; and who had abandoned the early education of his son to a woman who had been his mistress, after first being his servant. On the death of M. Dauvert, his relations, more solicitous for the instruction of his son than he himself had been, sent the lad to the central school. Notwithstanding his simplicity, George was apt, industrious, and proved a ready scholar; while Dauvert, who piqued himself upon his cleverness and wit, made

but little progress: however, he well knew how to avail himself of the good-nature of his unsuspecting friend, getting him to perform his tasks, and to become responsible for his roguish tricks; uniformly putting him forward in every enterprize at all dangerous, then keeping him in the back-ground when their schemes had proved successful, and reaping the advantage of them for himself. It was nevertheless observed that George, who was ever ready to execute whatever his friend wished, so long as he exposed himself alone to difficulties, steadily refused to do so whenever his compliance would have tended to expose or injure another, or when he was called upon to perform what he considered ungenerous. The old professor of Belles Lettres in the establishment did not entertain the general opinion as to the talents of our hero, but expressed for him much regard and attachment, while he seemed to think less favourably of the clever Dauvert.

The year 1802, like all those which we have beheld since the commencement of the revolution, was marked by important events: politics excited interest in schools as well as elsewhere, especially among the senior pupils. Military exploits create a lively enthusiasm in school-boys; and all the lads at the central school of Orleans spoke in terms of rapture of the battles of the First Consul, and his brave generals. George among the rest admired the prowess of our soldiers. "But," said he, "I can understand why we should fight when we are called upon to repel an enemy, and secure our own independence. Then, indeed, war is just; but at present—! we now fight only to conquer other countries! This is injustice—and in spite of all our victories, we shall in the end gain little by them." Dauvert would on such occasions, shrug his shoulders, observing, that George understood nothing of politics, and had no conception of na-

tional glory. George even ventured to censure several actions of the First Consul, in which he thought he perceived an abuse of power dangerous to liberty; while Dauvert expressed his admiration of the genius of the great man who understood how to create for himself a solid support both in the priests and the newly-made nobles—in the jacobins and the emigrants.

Towards the end of the last year of their remaining at school, both George and Dauvert were drawn by the conscription. The law required only those who had reached the age of twenty; but the greater the number of the victories we obtained, the greater was the number of soldiers wanted. Hitherto Dauvert had seemed animated with martial courage, and eager for an opportunity of displaying it; but now all of a sudden a serious misfortune threatened to thwart entirely this inclination. His sight was so much affected, that he was actually obliged

to wear spectacles. The kind-hearted George sympathized most sincerely with his companion; for it was to be feared, that, in consequence of this calamity, he would be rejected as unfit for the service. Some, less good-natured than our hero, affirmed, that it was the conscription that had occasioned the malady in Dauvert's eyes; an opinion which his friend treated as an illiberal calumny. However, Dauvert was in fact discharged on account of his infirmity; while George, having lost his father about eighteen months before, was legally exempted being the only son of a widow.

On quitting the school George and Dauvert vowed to each other an inviolable friendship. The latter set out for Touraine, promising to write to his friend, who, on returning home, addressed several letters to him, till at length receiving no kind of answer, he was wearied of writing.

On the death of George's father, his

mother and uncle had been appointed his guardians, the latter of whom had the management of his little patrimonial fortune. Madame Dercy, who had greatly aided her husband in the improvement and management of their farm, feared that she should no longer be able to conduct it by herself. It became therefore necessary to find an occupier who would rent it. At this period, the family of our hero consisted of his mother, the uncle whom we have just mentioned as being his guardian; and two cousins, children of sisters of the deceased father: on the maternal side he had no relatives. His uncle, M. Guillaume Dercy Saint Firmin, was a physician in good practice in the chief town of a *Sous-Prefecture* in the department of the Loiret, which we abstain from naming more expressly, from motives of discretion, and being unwilling to be accused of personality; for it is a place where, from time immemorial, the inhabitants have been parti-

cularly ticklish and sensitive in this respect, since, although they claim the right of speaking against all the rest of the world, they are not willing to concede the same privilege to others.

One of these cousins, M. Thomas Dupré, was an attorney in the *Tribunal de Premiere Instance*, in this town. The other, M. Auguste de la Morinière, held a situation in the *Sous-Prefecture*, while his wife kept one of the best accustomed shops in the place, for linen-drapery, haberdashery, and perfumery. Both his cousins were considerably older than George, the latter having a son ten years old, who succeeded Dercy at the central school at Orleans.

The question now was, what was to be done with George? for although the professors at the school of Orleans declared that he had profited considerably by his studies, his uncle and cousins were of opinion, that he had not acquired any great share of good sense at

school. Doctor Saint Firmin advised his sister-in-law to send the young man to study medicine at Paris; which was also the opinion of Madame Saint Firmin, who, in spite of the simplicity of her nephew, and his ignorance of the world, felt much prepossessed in his favour. The Doctor had no children, and he declared very affectionately, that he should be happy, as soon as George had taken his degree, either to resign his profession entirely, himself, or to remove to the metropolis, giving up his country practice to his kinsman. The good Madame Dercy expressed herself grateful to her brother-in-law and his wife for the lively interest they took in the welfare of her child; while George was, as usual, ready to accede to whatever was proposed. Without feeling any particular inclination for the profession, he made no objection to the scheme, and set out, furnished with letters of recommendation from his uncle to many of the

most eminent medical practitioners of the capital.

"George," said his relations as he was taking leave of them, "endeavour to push yourself forward in the world, and get rid of your rustic and simple notions." "My dear child," exclaimed his worthy mother, "continue to be always an honest man, and let me ever be able to give you the name of a *bon enfant!*"

CHAP. II.

GEORGE STUDYING AT PARIS.

OUR hero was well received by most of the medical men to whom his uncle had recommended him, particularly by the distinguished professors of the school. Some of the others, being more engaged in the duties of their profession, showed him less attention, while one or two displayed somewhat of hauteur. George was far from being hurt at the latter, but he did not repeat his visit, neither wishing to be importunate to them, nor caring to be cooly received. Among those of the profession with whom he became on terms of intimacy, was a certain Doctor Picot, a native of Brives-la-Gaillarde, who was both lively and communicative, and in some respects an advantageous connection. Still young, un-

married, a man of the world, elegant in his manners, driving a fashionable cabriolet, with a groom in a smart livery, he had an extensive acquaintance, and was in great request in the best society; especially among the ladies of counsellors of state, of gentlemen of the robe, general officers, and rich bankers. He had formed this brilliant connection through the interest of one of his old instructors, who had taken him by the hand, and become his patron. Thinking that he had found in George a young man to whom he could praise himself without restraint, and who would not fail to admire all that he said, Dr. Picot undertook to complete the education of the nephew of his friend Saint-Firmin.

While young Dercy was assiduously studying anatomy, chemistry, pathology, therapeutics, and the other sciences necessary to qualify him for becoming a good physician, although they frequently form so many bad ones, his friend Picot

was not sparing in lessons of another kind, and in instructing him how best to succeed in his profession. "The first step," said his Mentor, "is to attach yourself as a pupil—an admirer, an enthusiastic disciple, to some eminent practitioner, who will in return assist you with his advice, and procure you access to families of consequence. It is not all the world who are so lucky as to meet with such fortunate hits, or who know how to turn them to so good account, as I have done." Here, without exactly confirming a certain report respecting his intimacy with the wife of his former instructor, M. Picot had the weakness to give his hearer to understand that the affectionate interest of the lady had contributed not a little to secure for him the friendship of the husband. George was too great a novice not to consider this method of promoting his interest as being any thing but delicate; resolving at the same time never to adopt it for himself.

"As soon as you shall have obtained your diploma," continued his adviser, "you must take care to appear to have a great number of patients, even although you should not have a single one. There are a thousand little artifices that have been successfully practised for this purpose by many of the most eminent of the profession; and although well aware of them, the public always suffer themselves to be duped. In the first place you must have some kind of carriage— it is indispensable: formerly it was what they termed a *Demi-fortune*, at present a cabriolet is the vehicle most in vogue. You must have a first floor, elegantly furnished; not forgetting a library.—You have no money? well, then, you must obtain credit: and money will follow. Get a clever fellow of a servant, who must nevertheless have a certain air of simplicity about him; and whenever you dine abroad, be sure that he never fails to come running to

you out of breath, to say that you are sent for by some baroness, some countess, or even princess: then rise from table in a hurry, before the dessert, and go and take a cup of coffee at your leisure, at some coffee-house in the neighbourhood. Let your servant go too and make inquiry for you at the houses of all your acquaintance: let him disturb all the neighbourhood at night, pretending in his hurry to mistake their doors for your own, so great must be his eagerness to find out the 'celebrated Doctor,' physician in ordinary to his excellency the ambassador, or to the minister, or to the commander-in-chief of some of our armies." Notwithstanding his usual credulity, our novice seemed to doubt greatly whether such paltry tricks were ever resorted to.

"Why, good heavens," exclaimed the worthy son of Esculapius, "such things have been done yesterday, are doing to-day, and will be done again to-morrow."

George was even still more surprised when Dr. Picot explained to him sundry other little details of practice—how to prolong the indisposition of a rich patient, or to dispatch that of a poor one:—how to multiply his visits among persons of consequence, and among ladies labouring under a cold, or a fit of the megrims; and how to avoid the pressing solicitations of shopkeepers, and low people, to come to them, however urgent the case. He let him into the mystery of acquiring a reputation for literary talent, by pilfering from old writers, and above all by asking a considerable sum from a publisher. "This is a fashion," continued he, "which it is most important to follow. Whenever any new discovery is made, consider immediately, whether it will be most advantageous for you to become its warm partizan, or its implacable antagonist. Above all, be obstinate in your opinion, nor suffer yourself to be convinced by the most cogent

proofs, of its being erroneous. Make a noise;—get a party of friends and supporters;—above all, take care to have adversaries: and these latter you must not only attack yourself, but excite them to attack you."

We should never conclude were we to report all the sound advice which this new Mentor bestowed on our hero. The above conversation took place after a dinner, to which George had thought himself bound to invite M. Picot. The doctor, although he always recommended a strict regimen for his patients, was not very remarkable for temperance himself; and the wine, of which he had partaken very freely, had caused him to be thus unreserved and communicative. He had merely wished to astonish the novice, but he missed his mark, for instead of exciting admiration he only created a disgust in his auditor, that was not without some portion of contempt.

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed the

latter, "this is, surely, not a portrait of the whole profession!" He had already found, both among his instructors and his associates, many who were exemplary in their conduct, in their attachment to science; men of feeling and humanity; men, whose object it was to improve themselves in their art, and to restore their patients; yet, it must be confessed, he met with many others, who, without being quite so indiscreet in their confessions as M. Picot, adopted his principles; and it must also be acknowledged that, with a few exceptions, it was generally these who succeeded best in the world.

This confidential disclosure on the part of his friend Picot, and the number of those who, he perceived, acted upon such a doctrine, alarmed the scruples of our novice. Wealth was not his object: still he thought he should not be able to secure even the moderate independence at which he aimed, without having recourse to practices repugnant to his

feelings, or without applying himself to studies that would detain him for a long time from his widowed parent. He wrote, therefore, both to her and to his uncle, informing them that he felt no prepossession for the study of physic, but should prefer applying himself to the law; and then, instead of becoming, as had been proposed, the successor of his uncle the Doctor, he might succeed his cousin the attorney. Accordingly, with their consent, he abandoned his medical studies, and commenced those which were to prepare him for the bar, in the capacity of fourth clerk to an attorney of the *Tribunal de Premiere Instance*, in the Department of the Seine.

This attorney had paid a considerable sum for his office, but he had just married extremely well, and his wife's fortune had defrayed half the cost. Yet are not those large matrimonial fortunes which our young attorneys, notaries, and agents

are so eager to possess themselves of, very questionable advantages? Do not almost all those young ladies who bring so much money to their husbands, bring also a taste for expense, that they insist upon as a privilege? The lady of the attorney with whom George was, exercised in the most unreserved manner this right of being extravagant. What luxury of dress! What a number of cachemires and of jewels! What a mania for continually changing her brilliants! Her husband, however, who had his full share of those two vices so common among us—vanity and cupidity, approved of his wife's expensive habits, and indulged in equally expensive ones himself. In their residence at Paris they had a magnificent suite of rooms; the lady had a splendid drawing-room, an elegant bed-chamber, and a most delightful boudoir. In order to reach the study of the husband, it was necessary to pass through an antichamber, and a

spacious dining-room; the study itself was connected with a cabinet opening into a library superbly fitted up with mahogany and marble: this apartment seemed the very temple of the arts; here were to be seen numerous proof impressions of engravings, and even original paintings. Just out of town they had a charming country residence. During the winter they gave balls at Paris; and in the summer, entertainments at the latter place; nor was there any want of *diners-out*, or other persons to partake of them.

It was an attempt to outrival in pomp the rest of the profession; and Madame seemed determined to eclipse the ladies of all the notaries and advocates of their acquaintance. As to the wives of magistrates, they were considered as mere vulgar creatures whom nobody visited. How then was all this to be paid for? What continual engrossing of deeds did it demand, and how necessary was it to understand the art of protracting and

increasing law-suits, what dexterity to get hold of deeds, what cleverness in swelling out fees of costs! what skill and promptitude was requisite in order to conduct a cause advantageously, to be on a good understanding with the attorney of the opposite party, and to form fictitious suits! It was necessary that George should understand all this juggling, but the little that he did comprehend of it was sufficient to disgust him.

For the first few days he had been invited, with one or two of his fellow clerks, to the balls and concerts of Madame; where, besides dancing and music, there was conversation on literary topics, on the drama, the fine arts; and even plans of charity and benevolence were discussed; on which occasion both the master and mistress of the house expressed themselves like real philanthropists, and as enthusiastic admirers of noble actions. Hence our novice had conceived the best opinion

both of them and of their friends; but when, employed in the routine and minutiæ of business, he discovered by what means the resources for these splendid entertainments were furnished, how greatly were his ideas on this point changed! Nevertheless, in spite of all the pleasantries which he had been accustomed, even from childhood, to hear directed against the profession, he still thought that all lawyers did not resemble this elegant and dashing attorney whom he discovered to be a great knave. He had frequently occasion to go to the *Palais*, where he became acquainted with many young men who were clerks in other houses. What then was his astonishment, when he found that in a number of other offices things proceeded just as in his own; when he knew that in many minor establishments the same system of fleecing a client prevailed; and that many a little lawyer, in making what he termed *pickings*, pocketed as much as his own

principal did in more extensive transactions; when, in short, he perceived that it was pretty nearly the same in all dealings where the law was concerned! It is true, there are at Paris attorneys who are not exorbitant in their costs; barristers who come to the point at once, and who will not undertake to support bad causes. But, unfortunately, such conscientious persons were not those whom George became acquainted with. Therefore, without giving himself the trouble of seeking another principal, he concluded at once that he should never suit any one of the various branches of the law, and resolved to apply himself to commerce.

He accordingly became a clerk in a fashionable establishment. The shop was exceedingly elegant; and had a magnificent show-board, at least six feet high, gaily coloured and painted by an artist who had exhibited at the Louvre. Here, behind splendid squares of plate glass,

might be seen ribbands, gauzes, lace, Cachemire shawls, &c. arranged with the most graceful taste, although in apparent disorder. Long pieces of stuff of various colours hung in festoons from the ceiling. Six young persons were employed like himself in unfolding and folding up the various articles, in attending on the customers, and in executing the orders of the mistress of the shop. This latter personage was a haughty, domineering little woman, of a very bad temper; cross and snappish with her clerks, but exceedingly condescending and civil towards ladies who came in carriages, or who had been good purchasers. As to the husband, he rarely made his appearance in the shop; except when he came down, generally after breakfast, to help his wife to scold the young people. That being done, he disappeared, and either went out to the 'Change, or to some of his brother tradesmen to confer with them on business or on the news of the

day, after which he returned to dinner. Full of haughty airs, he seemed to have quite forgotten that he himself was once a clerk. In the evening he went out to the theatre, or to some party, or to a *café* that he was in the habit of frequenting. In his own business he was mean and over-reaching; but abroad he played high, and lost his money freely at *bouillotte* and *écarté*. The clerks were obliged to rise early in order to open the shop and to set it out to advantage, yet they did not retire till late at night, after having put every thing in order, and settled accounts with their mistress. In addition to this, they were poorly fed, and were obliged to hurry down their meals; and the little chamber which George occupied was more mean, and a story higher, than that which he had at the attorney's.

This way of living had but little to recommend it; still our hero could have put up with all these inconveniences; but what he found most intolerable was the

paltry little tricks of trade which he witnessed, and in which he was expected to bear a part. How often did he blush, when, acting according to the instructions of Madame Dupuis, he was obliged to aid her in making an overcharge; and when he saw how skilfully Madame, while she was expressing her gratitude to her customers, contrived to impose upon them both in the quantity and quality of what she sold. If at any time he ventured to make a remark on this conduct, the reply was: "Well, it is no more than what all the rest of the world does. When we have to make up payments we are obliged to sell our goods low; and frequently at a loss. Is it not right, therefore, that we should at other times make ourselves amends? Have done therefore with your foolish scruples, or you will never be fit for trade." His fellow shopmen laughed at his delicacy, and bestowed on him the fatal nickname that had been before applied to him, both in

his own family and while at school. Notwithstanding all this, both Monsieur and Madame Dupuis were termed very respectable, honest people: they did, it is true, impose upon their customers, but they were punctual in paying their bills when due.—Is it possible that the probity of a tradesman should be confined to this single point?

M. Dupuis libelled the profession to which he belonged, when he said that all the members of it resembled himself: but here again too, very unfortunately, George met with none of those tradesmen who are as noted for their integrity as their industry; none of those honourable, fair-dealing men, who, contented with a fair profit, neither overcharge nor vend an inferior article for a good one; in short, none of those excellent, conscientious tradesmen, who, thank heaven, are now so plentiful in Paris.

In casting his eyes on the other branches of traffic, George saw extensive

dealers enriching themselves by monopoly and forestalling; booksellers profiting by piracies and imitations; wood-merchants knowing how to tie up their bundles of wood with an eye to their own advantage; wine merchants compounding new mixtures; and numberless others, allowing themselves all kinds of tricks; yet all extolling their own conscientiousness, and some of them going to confession at church.

One of the correspondents of the respectable M. Dupuis became bankrupt for an enormous amount: and now a succession of failures to a greater or less extent took place, each one tending to produce another. These are opportunities that may sometimes be turned to account, and of which many are not backwards in availing themselves. Having lost by those who were indebted to them, they make their own creditors suffer. Yesterday they raised an outcry against the knavery of others; to-day they imi-

tate them, and brave the rumours of the world. Having been struck themselves, they in their turn strike others, and it becomes a general contest. How many stratagems are practised to carry off their booty! warehouses are emptied by night; goods are secreted at the house of some kind friend who has experienced a similar good service; an amicable separation of property is concerted between husband and wife; and while a statement of assets is enlarged by bills of no value, a statement of debts is still more enlarged by fictitious creditors. All these acts of knavery disgusted our hero; and as neither Monsieur nor Madame Dupuis were over-scrupulous as to such matters, he took a hasty leave of them, and went to moderate furnished lodgings. "Good heavens!" exclaimed he, "can it then be true that in every calling, and in every rank of life, honest people are only exceptions to the general rule?"

Being now of age, George had no one

to consult except himself; he therefore considered what he should now turn himself to. Having nothing to do, he went sometimes to a coffee-house: here one evening, while playing a game at domino, he heard an officer boasting of the service he had seen, and astonishing all present; whereupon George suddenly felt himself seized with a desire for military glory. "Who knows," said he, "but I may be destined to be a general?" The military hero related how much had fallen to his own share, in pillages and contributions; he expressed the satisfaction he felt at a new declaration of war;—his hope that the contest would be an animated one, and that many of his comrades would fall, and so make way for his own advancement; nor did he forget the good wine and the pretty girls, which he hoped to meet with in the course of his campaigns: until George's martial ardour was extinguished. He felt all his former repugnance return, for the profession of a

soldier forced to obey, without reflection, or without a will of his own; placing his glory in killing or being killed, not for the safety of his country, but for the mistaken interests of potentates.

After all, something must be done. Should he cultivate the arts? He had learnt both drawing and music; but it was too late for him to pursue them as a profession; he should never be able to distinguish himself? and what a mortification, either to play the lowest part, or be laid entirely on the shelf!

While he had been engaged in so many various pursuits, he had written a little dramatic piece interspersed with songs. And we have been informed that this young man, considered quite a simpleton and novice by every one, had displayed much wit and shrewd sense in this composition; yet he was so timid, and so backward in introducing himself to the theatre, that he did not even get his piece submitted to the reading committee.

At length thinking that idleness would be beneficial neither to his character nor his finances, he resolved to return home to his mother, to live as his father had done; and he left Paris without regret to go and cultivate his little farm.

CHAP. III.

GEORGE AND HIS FAMILY.

It was late when George arrived at the little town where his uncle and cousins resided. His mother lived three leagues further, at a village where their estate lay; and impatient to see her again, immediately on getting off the stage, he went to secure for himself a horse to set off at day-break the next morning; after which he proceeded to the house of his uncle the Doctor.

According to the custom of his country brethren, the Doctor was just returned from visiting several of his patients at the distance of some miles around, on a little poney. He had dined at the house of one of them, who had taken care to provide an excellent dinner for his good

doctor. George embraced both his uncle and his lady with so much frankness and cordiality, that they could not help returning it with kindness. M. Saint Firmin soon after took his hat and cane, for the purpose of making some visits in the town, promising to call upon his relations and inform them of George's arrival: and before long, all the family were assembled at the doctor's.

His repeated changes of situation were not exactly approved of by George's friends, who now, in addition to the former epithets of simpleton and novice, added those of a dissatisfied weathercock fellow who would never settle in life. "He is a chap," said they, "who will never get on in the world." It was still worse when, in the simplicity of his heart, our hero explained to them, without reserve, his motives for quitting so soon all the various professions to which he had successively applied himself. Each thought himself personally reflected upon.

"Do you mean to insinuate any thing against me," inquired his cousin, the man of law, "when you consider all attorneys as knaves?"

"Or do you imagine," asked the Doctor, "that all medical men are quacks destitute of humanity?"

"I know not," observed La Morinière, "what the trades-people of Paris may be; but I can assure you that my wife is as conscientious a shopkeeper, as she is a clever one."

Perceiving the blunder he had committed, and the offence he had given, George began to apologize, saying,

"True, there are undoubtedly honest people in all callings, and I believe you to be of the number."

On this they set about justifying those very transactions that had appeared to our novice to be so very questionable.

The Doctor maintained that a certain degree of quackery was necessary for a physician.

"And why should I spare my clients?" said the attorney, with a laugh half satirical and half candid: "can I be found fault with, if I am no worse than others? So much the worse for those who go to law: I pity them; but I must live by them,—it is my business."

The conscientious lady who kept shop, was of opinion that good bargains were not to be neglected, and that the most was to be made of a customer who knew not how to deal.

"That is it," said the Doctor, "in addition to the particular knowledge requisite for any profession, it is necessary to have a certain tact and address, to understand the mystery of one's trade, and to know how to turn our knowledge to account."

Rather surprised at the somewhat indiscreet candour of his relations, George observed, "All this may be very well; but have I, who possess none of these qualities that you so much extol, acted

wrong in giving up professions where you say they are indispensable?"

In the quality of his uncle and former guardian, M. Saint Firmin ventured to make some paternal remonstrances, concluding with a sigh, by inquiring, "And what, after all, do you intend to do?"

George now explained his humble scheme of living in the country, and his intention of cultivating his father's farm, as soon as the lease held by his tenant, Claude Lallemand, should have expired.

At this every one shrugged his shoulders:—"What! a young man who might look so much higher!"—"Who might reflect a credit upon his family!"—"Who had received such a good education!"—"To vegetate on his farm!"—"To become a countryman, a mere ploughman!"

"Well," exclaimed the uncle, "since such is your determination, and you will do so, you have a favourable opportunity of putting your fine scheme into execu-

tion at once. Did you not inform me, Dupré, that you had distrained Lallemand's crop?"

"How!" cried George, who, in spite of his natural mildness, was apt on some occasions to express himself with warmth, "you have seized my tenant's crop! why and by what right have you done so?"

"Why?" replied the Doctor, "why, because he is in arrear. By what right! —have you not confided to me the management of your estate since you have been of age? I therefore put the business into Dupré's hands."

"Poor fellow," exclaimed George, whose anger had now given way to compassion, "he is in arrear! Has any misfortune then happened to him?"

"Oh, 'tis the same excuse as they all have—a bad year—repairs that he has been obliged to make at his own expense, because I have refused to do them—has not been able to sell, or could not sell to advantage; and I know not what other

excuses. Such excuses as would never impose upon me," said Dupré.

"Besides," added the Doctor, "why should you complain? Thanks to this seizure, nothing can be more easy now than to let him off by cancelling the lease at once, in a friendly manner.

"Or else by going to law," said the attorney.

During this dialogue George had remained thoughtful. "It is enough," said he; "to-morrow I will have some talk on the subject with my honest tenant: I will consider what is to be done:—I will consult my mother."

"Your mother indeed! she understands these matters admirably!"—"Not more than yourself," said another.—"Nay, not even so much."—"'Tis quite a chip of the old block," observed the lawyer to the Doctor, with a jeering air.

After these remarks the evening passed off rather sullenly; not that George slackened in his attentions towards his rela-

tions, even towards the man of law, in spite of the displeasure he felt at the treatment his tenant had received from him; but they were all out of humour with him, and addressed him only to indulge their satirical remarks, which they now did without reserve. Madame Saint Firmin alone appeared to have some consideration for her young kinsman. This lady was an accomplished woman, who piqued herself upon her superior understanding, her politeness, and her sensibility. In a small provincial town, the wife of a physician ranks among the best society. Madame Saint Firmin continually observed that this circumstance did not render her haughty, nor cause her to regard her relations at all less affectionately; yet her relations often complained, that her attentions towards them wore an air of condescension; and they accused her of treating her husband's family as her inferiors. There was somewhat of this condescension and

air of patronage in the kindness which she displayed towards George: it was plain that she had for him that kind of compassion which must be felt for a young man without judgment.—All the rest of the company muttered that this good simple creature seemed to be come back among them, only to say rude things to them, and to commit silly actions.

Oh! how different from the cold, restrained, and haughty reception which he had met with, from his uncle and cousins, was that which he experienced the following day from his mother! The worthy Madame Dercy thought she could never sufficiently admire her son; he was grown so tall, and was such a handsome, fine-looking young man! His features too were so much like those of his poor father! George on his part had a great deal to inquire of his mother, about her health, her present situation, and way of living. He promised never to quit her again, assuring her that he existed

only for her sake. They looked at each other, embraced, burst into tears, and put the same questions twenty times over, without waiting for an answer before they made new ones. The joy of Madame Dercy was still more lively when she perceived, almost from his first speech, that her son was the same honest, worthy fellow he always had been. We know not which of them it was who first mentioned Claude Lallemand, and his being distrained for rent; but Madame Dercy was well pleased to find, that her son was hurt at this odious proceeding; she herself had known nothing of it until it had been done. How rejoiced too was George himself to learn that his mother had had no share in this action of his cousin Dupré's, but that she was heartily grieved at it, and had intended to write to him on the subject. This being the case, there was no occasion for him to persuade or advise; and they therefore lost not an instant in proceeding to the farm.

They found poor Claude and his numerous family in deep affliction. "Do not weep, my good people," said Madame Dercy, "here is my son. Dry your tears, my pretty little Charles," continued she, taking upon her lap the youngest child, who was weeping, because he saw his mother, and sisters, in tears; "my son is come hither on purpose to put an end to your father's troubles."

Claude informed George, that the distress for rent was the more unfor tunate, as he had the very day before met with an opportunity of selling his corn, which if he lost, he should be nearly ruined; while if he could avail himself of it, he should then find the means of extricating himself from his embarrassments, and even be enabled to pay the quarter that was approaching. "You see then," said George, "that by removing the distress, I act both for my own interest as well as yours: you will pay, and I shall be paid."

George had returned, with the intention of taking the farm into his own hands: Claude's lease had only two years to run, yet he was far from requiring him to give it up without some indemnification. Little as the doing so might inconvenience his tenant, he was resolved to wait till the expiration of the two years; but things turned out quite differently. In his conversation with Claude, the latter expressed a wish to hold the farm a dozen years longer, till his youngest daughter, now only seven years old, should be married. His wife had calculated, that this term was necessary to enable them to lay by a little marriage-portion for each of their three girls, and also to save something for themselves against their old age. George had long known these honest people: he remembered Claude when he was his father's head ploughman; instead, therefore, of requesting him to give up the lease, he was the first to propose that it

should be renewed. It may be conceived, with what transport this offer was received by the whole family, and what benedictions they bestowed upon their generous landlord. Instead of weeping, the children now leaped and danced about for joy; while George's mother was as joyful as any of them. "Well then," said George, "I will now employ myself in study. I do not wish to devote myself to the arts professionally, but they are delightful, when pursued only as a recreation. I am still young, and can wait; I will therefore learn agriculture under my tenant. Who can tell but that by adding his experience and practical knowledge to the little theory which I already possess, and which I shall be able to improve, we shall render the estate more profitable? And what is more than all, I shall be near my mother. To study her happiness will be to me a religious duty! Heaven grant that she may be long pre-

served to me! 'What rapture is still in store for me even in this life!"

The following day George proceeded to town with his tenant to a notary's; and while the new lease was drawing up, stepped to his uncle's, who was fortunately at home, it being a leisure day with the Doctor, and with his patients also. George said that he was obliged to him, for having managed his concerns, both while he acted as his guardian, and afterwards when empowered by himself; but that being now of age, and determining to reside in the country, he ought no longer to trespass on his kindness, and would therefore take the management of his affairs into his own hands.

"This is what I expected, and what I ought too to have expected," cried M. Saint Firmin. "You withdraw the management of your property from me;—I hope you may not repent of this step."

"I shall consider it my duty, Sir, always to consult you——"

"Aye, and never to follow my advice."

"I shall always, Sir, take it into consideration, and never reject it without mature deliberation."

George now proceeded to his cousin's the attorney, to tell him to give notice of the replevy of the distress. "This is just what I expected, and what I might have expected," exclaimed the man of law, in the very words of the Doctor; "you have been, I suppose, to apologize to your tenant, and have cast all the odium of this shocking affair upon me. It is well that we lawyers have broad shoulders. However, I wash my hands entirely of the whole business: follow your own whims; and then if things turn out ill, so much the worse for you." To this petulant speech, George replied with calmness, and endeavoured to moderate his cousin's anger. As he was on the point of taking

leave of him, his other relative, M. la Morinière, made his appearance, the same who held a situation in the *Sous-Prefecture*, and was come to inform the attorney of a good piece of news.

An old servant, named Margaret, had for many years been in the family of the grandmother of the three cousins, and afterwards entered that of Madame Dercy. On the death of George's father, Madame la Morinière had taken her; but Margaret, not altogether liking the disposition of that lady, had quitted her upon good terms. The whole family had always pretended to feel a great interest for this old domestic. They used to speak of her attentions towards their grandmother, and would remark that it was their duty not to desert her in her old age; yet it was more especially George, and his mother, that took care of this worthy creature, who was become infirm, and could not obtain a place at service. They were both ready to con-

tribute their share towards the discharge of a debt of gratitude; but what was the destiny which the other generous branches of the family intended for the aged domestic of the grandmother? The *Sous-Prefecture* clerk was come to inform the attorney, that through his interest he had obtained Margaret's admission into the town hospital.

"How into the hospital!" exclaimed George.

"Yes," repeated Dupré, rubbing his hands, "Is it not a lucky chance, both for her, and for ourselves? There she will live and die very comfortably—without even costing us a penny!"

"Not even to bury her," added George sarcastically, who felt all his anger return at this piece of intelligence, which filled the others with so much joy; yet this time he restrained his indignation.

On quitting his cousin's, George inquired his way to Margaret's, and there he found the poor old creature bathed

in tears, for she had been informed of what was intended for her; and although she felt it to be her duty to acquiesce, it was not without a severe struggle. What then was her joy when she beheld one of the grandsons of her old mistress, him whom she used to call her darling little George; and when she heard him propose to her to come and reside with him and his mother, not in the capacity of a domestic, but as an old and valued friend! She still wept, but her tears were now those of joy; and she promised to be soon prepared to set out with him, on which George returned to the conveyancer's.

There had been sufficient time to have the writings drawn up, and George apologized both to the conveyancer and to Claude for having made them wait. The former, having other clients to attend to, directed his principal clerk to read over to George the new lease. On coming to the part where the rent

was mentioned, George was greatly surprised to find that it was lower than what he had always received.

"My good tenant," said he, "I am far from wishing to raise your rent; but still, do you think it either reasonable or just that it should be lowered?"

"Certainly not," replied Claude, "but both your uncle and cousin, Sir, did as is now done, in the former lease. We have put down that sum in the lease, because the land-tax, which will fall upon you, will be less; and by a separate agreement, I bind myself to pay to you the difference between the actual and nominal rent."

"I don't understand this, Claude," said George; "this would be a deception, a fraud."

"But consider, M. Dercy, the taxes are very high, and will probably be still higher; and that, if we may believe the wise-heads, where there are heavy duties on one hand, there will be evasions on the other."

"Very probably," said George, "but yet I will not be guilty of such a deceit."

"But consider, Sir, 'tis what is done every day; no one objects to such little evasions of the tax."

"Listen to me," replied George, after a minute's reflection; "if even I should be tempted to tell a falsehood that might be justifiable, in order to serve another, I assure you that I should not do it without serious deliberation, nor without duly weighing all the circumstances that might palliate it. But here, where I myself am the only party to be benefited, there is no occasion for much reflection. Therefore, Sir," continued he, addressing himself to the clerk, "be so good as to insert in the lease the actual rent I am to receive. If the duties on property are raised, so much the worse. I hope to heaven that it may not be the case, both on my own account, and that of other land-proprietors."

The clerk, who had listened to this speech with his mouth wide open, and holding up his pen, immediately proceeded to write, without saying another word, but not without first raising his eyes in astonishment, and shrugging his shoulders. We cannot, however, inform our readers whether he meant thereby to say, "What an excellent, HONEST MAN!" or, "What a complete NOVICE in the ways of the world!"

George returned from town with Claude and Margaret; nor was he mistaken in supposing that his mother would be delighted to afford an asylum to the worthy old servant. It is not easy to conceive how attentive George was towards his mother; or how much he expended in procuring her various little gratifications and comforts. He was careful to furnish her with many handsome articles of dress, and with delicacies of the table; nor did he ever return from the neighbouring town without bringing her

something by way of present; and was truly happy at perceiving how much she was delighted by these marks of attention. This affectionate mother dared hardly express the least wish, so sure she was that her excellent George would put himself to any inconvenience, or resign any inclination of his own, on purpose to comply with it.

When his relatives heard how he had acted at the notary's, relative to the lease, they exclaimed, "What complete ignorance of the world!"

The lawyer could not restrain his vexation: "Do you not see," said he, "the inference which results from this scrupulous probity which he affects on every occasion?—we, who do not act like him, are of course little better than knaves."

On learning that he had taken Margaret home to his own house, M. La Morinière observed: "After all, we did our duty; we obtained for this woman

a comfortable asylum in a good hospital. If George wishes to have the credit of discharging the obligations of the whole family, let him, in heaven's name! do so. I have a house and family of my own to provide for."

"Nor will my family," said the Doctor, "allow me to do more than I have already done."

"Nor me either," added the attorney. "Yet, after all, are you deceived by this pretended meritorious action? Trust me, there is more of pride than of charity in it. Such weak creatures never want for pride."

When they heard how eagerly George anticipated all his mother's wishes and inclinations, Madame Saint-Firmin was in raptures with him for his affectionate conduct: "Well, no one can deny that he is a most excellent son!"

"Who ever doubted it?" observed her husband; "let him study his mother's comforts:—'tis his duty; but

cannot he be contented with doing what is right? Why should he abridge his own pleasures in order to provide her with such superfluities? Does it become him to ruin himself on her account? Not satisfied with not increasing his fortune, he is going the way to spend all he has."

"Yes," replied the attorney; "and you will find, one day or other, that both he and his mother will become a burden to us."

"And the old servant into the bargain," said La Morinière, "whom I shall perhaps not then be able to get into the hospital."

"Ah! what a sad misfortune it is," cried Madame La Morinière, to have such a person belonging to our family! It is quite a calamity!"

In the meanwhile the winter was approaching, and George thought that his mother would then find residing in the country very dull; he accordingly hired

for her handsome apartments in the neighbouring town, where was a separate chamber for Margaret, and another for himself. "Another notable piece of folly!" exclaimed his relations; "an additional expense! a house in the town —a house in the country—the foolish fellow is certainly mad! He sets up for a person of consequence!"

Two days preceding that on which George and his mother were to leave the village, the country was afflicted with a calamitous event: in consequence of very heavy rains, all the rivers had overflowed their banks; and several locks of a canal had been destroyed. The inundation had already reached some houses, and great apprehensions were entertained for the safety of the inmates of a mill situated a few hundred yards from the village. The miller and his people were from home; only the wife with two young children were in the dwelling, which was approached

by a causeway between the canal and a meadow. The latter was already inundated the day before; and at break of day it was perceived, with alarm, that the causeway also was covered with water nearly a foot deep, while the poor woman was seen at a window with her two children, stretching out her arms and imploring succour. George had been employed during the whole of the night in assisting the inhabitants of the village to throw up some banks, and forming dykes, to drain off the water. What was his distress when he beheld the perilous situation of this unfortunate family! The water was visibly rising: there were no boats, for the one generally stationed near the mill had been carried away by the current. Suddenly he perceived among the crowd collected in that part of the street where the water had not yet touched, a stranger on horseback, who appeared to be only vexed at being stopped on his journey.

Having looked at the depth of water on the causeway, George hastily approached the traveller, and without any ceremony, said, "Sir, you must get off your horse."

"How! get down?"

"This very instant;" which command he uttered in so determined a tone, that the stranger, quite confounded, alighted, and George leaped into the saddle, and galloped along the causeway. Arrived at the mill, he received the two children from the mother, who let them down from the window by a cord fastened under their arms. Madame Dercy herself received the two little creatures from the hands of their rescuer, who instantly returned for their mother. This time the water had risen so much, that the horse appeared rather to swim than run, but notwithstanding this, the second journey was accomplished as successfully as the first.

George was received by the crowd

with a shout of approbation, and he took back the horse to its owner, who during this exploit had frequently cried out, "Is the fellow mad? He will drown my horse—he will drown himself." On receiving back the animal, quite safe, he cried, "You are a fine, brave fellow:—I was quite alarmed for you. Only consider, on one side a deep canal, on the other, a meadow covered with ten feet of water!"

"Yes," replied our hero, "but there were only two feet of water on the causeway, and I know it so well—every step. Besides, are there not trees at certain distances which served to guide me? I am able too to swim. I have therefore done nothing so very extraordinary; but I should have been truly miserable, if, after saving the children, I had not saved their mother likewise."

CHAP. IV.

GEORGE IN A COUNTRY TOWN.

George and his mother were now settled in the town, where the report of his heroic action had preceded him, much to the pain of his modesty, which was distressed by the compliments that were bestowed on him. His relations were not the last to congratulate him on this occasion. The intrepidity and presence of mind which he had displayed, had restored him to their favour; and compelled them to acknowledge that he possessed some good qualities, although so ignorant in some respects, and disinterested even to folly. But the influence this action had on them displayed itself very differently; for while it filled Madame the shopkeeper

and the attorney with envy, it elated both the Doctor's wife, and the clerk of the *Sous-Prefecture.* The former were mortified at the commendations bestowed upon their young relative, in which they were obliged to take a part; and were inwardly chagrined that the public esteem should raise George so much above the rest of the family. The Doctor's wife, on the contrary, and M. La Morinière, were proud of being allied to him, and thought that his merit redounded to the honour of his relations. It was the extreme sensibility of Madame Saint-Firmin that made her express herself with so much enthusiasm on the noble conduct of her 'dear nephew:' as to M. La Morinière, his admiration was not exactly disinterested; for the Sous-Prefect, Mayor, and other authorities of the town, having honoured George with their visits, he thought that his cousin's interest would further his advancement, or procure for him

some marks of favour. This difference of opinion was productive of frequent disputes: "Well," said the attorney, "there is no denying that he has shown some courage, but it was only a momentary impulse: is he at all more sensible or prudent for what he has done?"

"'Tis certainly a noble action," observed the Doctor, very gravely; "but is he then the only one among us who displays his courage in the service of his fellow-creatures? I myself—for instance, expose myself to equal—nay perhaps greater—dangers by the bedside of my patients, in epidemic and epizootic diseases."

"He is a hero," exclaimed Madame Saint-Firmin, interrupting her husband; "and I am concerned to find that you, who have generally so much nobleness of soul, should not do justice to an amiable and interesting young man, who is your own nephew, and who was once

your word. For my own part I feel a pleasure, I consider it an honour, a duty, to introduce him to all my female acquaintance. This triumph is to me a complete gratification.

Formerly the inhabitants of a provincial town in France were divided into three classes. There was the highest class consisting of the gentry and their families: the middling class, which was composed of men in office, professional men, lawyers, collectors, and all those holding a rank immediately above that of trades-people. Shopkeepers, and their wives, some persons who styled themselves artists, respectable artisans, and all who lived by their trade or calling, formed the third class, or what was termed *la petite société.* As to the clergy, whether secular or regular, they were divided among these different gradations of ranks: the *curés*, priors, and the superiors of convents, were the spiritual directors and confessors of ladies of rank; the vicar, and the fathers of

well-endowed orders, Theatins, Benedictines, &c. had for their penitents, the wives of those of the second class, at whose houses they used to pass their evenings; while the spiritual direction of shopkeepers' wives, and of females still lower in life, devolved on Recollets, Capuchins, Cordeliers, and Carmelites. One feature common to all these classes, was an inexhaustible spirit of scandal. It might have been supposed that the events of the revolution would have tended to change and subvert every thing: quite the contrary, scandal continued in all its force, and there were new divisions and subdivisions that had taken place among the various ranks of society.

The nobility, whether those who had returned from emigration, or those who had remained at their chateaus, no longer retained the upper hand, when they resided in the town; yet they did not mix with the other ranks, nor did they even associate with each other, but were sub-

divided into two separate classes. Some were attached to the new government, and aspired to the honour of becoming chamberlains; others still continued to regret the old regime; for at that period every provincial town had its *faubourg St. Honoré*, where Napoleon was held in as much disdain as in the *salons* of the dukes and vicomtesses in the Rue Varennes, and that de l'Université. To this succeeded the class of the higher functionaries, the *Sous-Prefect*, the judges, &c. Next to those were the less honourable, although more lucrative situations of the receiver of taxes, and others holding offices connected with the government; all of whom came from Paris, and were strangers in the town, where they were but little looked upon by the inhabitants, and lived almost entirely among each other. Among the citizens themselves, those who were of most consequence, were the mayor, and the more opulent merchants and manufacturers, who had converted

some of the former monasteries into warehouses and factories; and after them what are termed the *bourgeoise*. Many Parisians had accepted of employments in provincial towns, but the provincials themselves seemed without exception to look towards Paris as to the mart of fortune; the ladies especially, who regarded it as the focus of taste, pleasure, and all human felicity. As was the case formerly, there was no public meeting, whether it was a ball or a funeral, in which disputes for precedency did not take place, and these served to keep up a continual civil war. During the despotic reign of the imperial power, this petty species of warfare was not founded on diversity of political opinions, since, in fact, there was but one manifestation of public feeling, namely, enthusiasm for the ruler of France; nevertheless, there was a decided hostility entertained against those, who, since the year 1789, had been philosophers, pa-

triots, and republicans; and, however moderate had been their conduct during the troubles of the revolution, they were denounced in a body under the titles of Terrorists and Jacobins. Many had in consequence been obliged to quit their native place; but then, on the other hand, there were not a few patriots, who, driven from other towns, were come to settle in the one of which we are speaking. There were reading rooms, in which people did not read, but either played at some game, or smoked, or held debates: there was also a society of private theatricals, who were in the habit of quarrelling about their parts. The priests, who were not very numerous, were sufficiently submissive and obsequious, and very grateful towards the august author of the Concordat; and it is said, that it was either the *curé*, or the vicar of this place, who, being suspected of certain ultramontane opinions, replied with great naiveté, "What can people find to cen-

sure in me?—Every Sunday I preach the Gospel for a quarter of an hour, and the other three quarters I preach with enthusiasm, for the emperor and the conscription."

It was to these various societies, that Madame Saint-Firmin introduced George and his mother, for George would make no visit without her. For a short time he was an object of general attention: the men shook him by the hand, while the women were in raptures with him. They admired what they termed his graceful, modest reserve; and even that diffidence which formed such a contrast with the courage he had displayed, at all which his cousin, the attorney, felt no little chagrin. It was not long, however, before some other subject of fresh interest appeared; and George was forgotten. Nor was the want of novelty the only circumstance that tended to render our hero less the object of general admiration; he not only abstained him-

self from speaking against others, but was even so indiscreet as to take the part of those who were attacked, and were not present to defend themselves; and he never failed to suggest something by way of extenuation for those important charges which persons are always bringing forward against their dear friends. Did any one find fault with any entertainment given by Madame such-a-one; did he insinuate that the gay dress of that widow was not quite decorous, or hint at an intrigue carried on by another lady, George instantly stepped forward to shield the attacked from the shafts of slander; and would remark, that even those whose own conduct was irreproachable, were not justified in personal reflections on others. It may be imagined that this conduct did not obtain for him the good opinion of these censors *pro bono publico.* "What a creature it is!" exclaimed they; "he is shocked at the least remark on the follies of others!

He has no idea of a little harmless raillery!—He is really too dull to enter into the spirit of it.—Why should any one affect so much precision, and such singularity?—Why not be like the rest of the world? As to the noble action which has gained him so much credit, it was merely a momentary impulse—that species of courage, very likely to be displayed by those who are blind to the danger they incur."

Madame Saint Firmin, and M. la Morinière, were not the last to perceive the deficiencies and absurdities of their relation, who soon gave them greater cause of dissatisfaction; for he withdrew himself by degrees from the higher circles, because they spoke with contempt of those beneath them; nor did he wish to visit among inferior society, because there they both envied and ridiculed people of rank. At length a very serious charge was brought against him: he had connected himself with some very re-

spectable persons, but who had the reputation of having been patriots. "Good heavens!" said they, "is it possible that he can intend to turn jacobin?"

To speak sincerely, the only motive that induced our hero to mix at all in the society of the town, was his wish to gratify his mother, who had always been very desirous of associating with 'good company.' But he easily contrived to render her evenings agreeable at home, by reading to her works of amusement, and in occasionally relieving old Margaret, who used to play at piquet with Madame Dercy. Not long afterwards, a new amusement presented itself, a company of actors having arrived in town; and George, accompanied by his mother, and their good Margaret, missed scarcely a single performance. The attentions which he always showed them on such occasions, did not escape the notice of the company; and many strangers remarked with astonishment the polite

assiduity of a young man towards a couple of old women.

It was this desire of pleasing his mother, that induced him, during the time of the carnival, to give a handsome entertainment to his relations, when he invited M. and Madame Saint Firmin, M. and Madame la Morinière, the son of the latter, and Dupré. On this occasion, his relations were so far from making their usual remarks on George's singularities, and ignorance of the world, that they were, on the contrary, exceedingly good-humoured and civil; so much so, that both the Doctor and the attorney got tipsy out of honour to their cousin's hospitality. On the last day of the carnival, George took both his mother and Margaret to the theatre, where there was a masked ball. Quitting them in the course of the evening under some pretext, he shortly after returned, disguised as a fortune-teller, and in this character, instead of prophesying conquests to the youthful

beauties present, he amused himself with assuring his mother of what he knew would delight her—of her son's filial regard and gratitude towards her; so that at length, the good Madame Dercy, although not gifted with particular penetration, could not help discovering him.

These little gratifications and enjoyments, inconsiderable as they were in themselves, were attended with greater expense than George's resources could well allow; but an opportunity now presented itself, which, had he known how to avail himself of it, would have put him in possession of a considerable fortune.

CHAP. V.

MADEMOISELLE DEGODET.

In the town where George and his mother now resided there was a lady of some consequence, whose age was near forty, or if any credit is to be given to the insinuations of certain malicious people, she had already passed that formidable epoch. This fair lady was Mademoiselle Alexandrine Degodet, the daughter of a gentleman who had disappeared at the commencement of the revolution, in consequence of which he had been denounced as an emigrant, and his property seized. Alexandrine had been intended for a cloister, and at the time of her father's flight she had already taken the veil of novice, but was soon afterwards obliged to quit the convent, when she found a resource in some of the

acquirements she had made; and, without being a capital performer, contrived to support herself tolerably, by giving lessons in singing, and on the piano. Hardly had she left the retreat of virgin celibacy and entered anew into the temptations of the world, ere she was seized with a passion for the holy bonds of matrimony—a passion that had not yet quitted her at the period of which we are now speaking. She had indeed never possessed beauty, but she had once possessed youth, and had received several offers, some of them not contemptible ones; among others, the old organist of the parish; the leader of the band to some amateur concerts, and to the company of players that visited the town; and a dancer who had come down from the Opera-house at Paris, to give lessons in the country. But actuated by the vanity of youth, and also by the pride of family, Alexandrine had rejected every one of these suitors. In

the mean while, as the number of years increased, that of her admirers diminished, and the poor demoiselle, who had by this time learnt a little practical philosophy, would now hardly have rejected an alliance that she would formerly have looked upon with scorn; but, alas! neither gentles nor plebeians aspired to the honour of her hand. In her despair she had condescended to listen to the suit of an huissier to a court of justice; who was not only a widower, old, and any thing but handsome, but also attached to his bottle, and by no means of the most amiable temper whenever he had indulged too freely—a circumstance of no rare occurrence. What was to be done? Alexandrine had talents and accomplishments; but then her charms, —such as they had been, were faded; and as to fortune, she possessed none. And the old huissier, although flattered at the idea of being accepted by the daughter of a *ci-devant* baron, still hesitated to

conclude the match. Turning over, one day, some family papers belonging to mademoiselle, for she had no secrets for him, he discovered what he had before suspected—that the father of his tender inamorata, although his name had been placed on the list of emigrants, had in fact never gone abroad, but had died at a village in the neighbourhood. The huissier lost no time in obtaining the register of his death, and an affidavit that the *ci-devant* Baron Degodet had never quitted the country. His estates had been put under sequestration, but had never been sold: the huissier therefore drew up numerous petitions, all signed by the demoiselle, to the council of the Arrondisement, to that of the Prefecture, to the Minister of the Interior, and to His Majesty the Emperor. He made personal applications in every quarter, undertook a journey to Orleans, and even to Paris. In the mean while the lady continued to press the marriage; but

her lover was anxious that the business in hand should be decided previously to their nuptials. At length his numerous and incessant exertions, which had been in no small degree promoted by pecuniary advances of his own, were crowned with success; and, instead of marrying a poor decayed gentlewoman, it was a wealthy heiress whom he was about to conduct to the altar. Thanks to the interests of a cousin of his own, who was married to the valet of a minister, Mademoiselle Degodet was reinstated in her paternal possessions, as sole heiress; having lost both her brothers, and an elder sister, in favour of whom it had been intended that she should take the veil. The whole of this fortune, with the addition of the interest, which had been growing during the period of sequestration, was now restored entire to the fortunate mademoiselle, whose father had been unjustly inserted in the list of emigrants. O! how irresistibly captivating

did this delightful news render the now charming Alexandrine in the eyes of her devoted admirer. But—we will not write a philippic against female ingratitude and female inconstancy,—the wealthy Alexandrine saw herself surrounded by a crowd of more seductive wooers: she was now actually besieged by all the dashing young fellows in the town. This circumstance was by no means calculated to advance the suit of her former swain; on the contrary she wondered how she could have been so blind to his defects. Before, she had looked upon him as a disinterested lover, and as a man of more taste than the rest of his sex; but now, she saw in him nothing more than her agent and man of business, whose good services she was bound to reward, but who certainly was not a fit match for a woman of her rank and fortune. Ah! wherefore did the unfortunate huissier not seize the prey while it was his own, why did he defer their union? For-

tunately, however, instead of drowning himself, this more philosophic lover determined to drown his chagrins:—his bottle consoled him for the ingratitude of his Alexandrine.

This haughty beauty was already envied by all her own sex; who, while they congratulated her most affectionately on her being restored to her estates, vented a thousand sarcasms on her loss of youth—sarcasms so much the more bitter, as many of them had the mortification of beholding their lovers quit their standards, in order to range themselves under those of Mademoiselle Degodet. Surrounded by flatteries, and the object of tender avowals, she had only to select one from the numerous solicitors for her hand. Yet, by some singular caprice, the person on whom her choice would have fallen was precisely the one who did not present himself as a candidate—our hero. Courage has ever been esteemed by the fair, and the manner in

which George had displayed his bravery had obtained for him a warm admirer in Mademoiselle Degodet; nor had her admiration, like that of so many others, subsequently evaporated. She dwelt with enthusiasm on the magnanimity and intrepidity of the young man; and when she afterwards witnessed his constant attentions everywhere to his mother, she was struck by his unaffected manners, and his youth; by his filial regard for his parent, and his handsome person. Sometimes, indeed, the prejudice in favour of family would oppose the tender inclinations of her heart; but love and philosophy ultimately prevailed. George and his mother were invited to her evening parties, on which occasions she assumed every character that could render her interesting. At one time she would be the serious and dignified matron; at another, sportive, giddy, and playful as a young girl; seeking to captivate George by her intelligence and

elegance of manners, or to interest him by her affectionate and easy behaviour. Games of forfeit were now a favourite amusement with her, and George had always some punishment awarded to him; but unfortunately he was too simple to avail himself of the opportunities thus thrown in his way, and when commanded by Alexandrine to recover what he had forfeited by kissing some lady in the company, was too stupid to select mademoiselle herself. So that, at length, seeing that all her little artifices and encouragement were thrown away upon such a novice, she determined to have recourse to another mode of conduct, and to make her attack upon Madame Saint Firmin.

Without expressly declaring to the Doctor's lady that she was captivated by her nephew, which her sense of decorum and good breeding prevented, Mademoiselle Alexandrine contrived to give her very well to understand that she should not

be inaccessible to M. George: and that she had remarked, that he seemed unconscious of his own merit and required to be encouraged. This was sufficient to let Madame into the secret of her inclinations, and to induce that lady to lead the conversation to something more explicit than obscure hints. Quite delighted with the idea of having to negociate a marriage, the doctor's wife received this confidential communication in the kindest manner; and eagerly assured the amorous Mademoiselle Degodet that she should be happy to promote such a union. She set off directly to call upon her nephew: he was from home, but she found his mother, to whom, with an air of vast importance, she communicated the confession she had just received, painting at the same time in the most favourable colours, the passion which this tender friend entertained for George, and the advantages which would result to the family from such a marriage. The good

Madame Dercy was quite overcome at so dazzling a prospect, and promised to speak immediately to her son on the subject; Madame Saint Firmin agreeing to call the following day in order to be informed of his answer.

Madame had been engaged to secrecy, and she had required a similar promise of secrecy from Madame Dercy: she then hastened to communicate it as a profound secret to Madame La Morinière, who again told it as a secret to her husband. In short, the secret spread so rapidly that there was not one of our hero's rela tions who was not acquainted with it the next day, when they all met at Madame La Morinière's, to congratulate each other on the piece of good fortune that had fallen to the lot of so near a relation. Envy, however, was the predominant feeling on this occasion.

"What is there after all," said one, "in this young fellow, that he should captivate this rich mademoiselle?"

"'Tis certainly a piece of very great good luck for him!"

"I am certainly," said the attorney, arranging his shirt collar, and the false locks of his scalp, "delighted at his good fortune: still, without any disparagement to him, I think that there are many other single men and widowers equally attractive."

"Well, well," observed the Doctor, "we shall have a dashing wedding, and it gives me great pleasure to think that such is the case; but I cannot stop here to talk of it, I must go and visit my patients."

"And I," said La Morinière, with a sigh, "must go back to my office. 'Tis a mortifying thing to be forced to drudge, and to see people without any kind of capacity—Ah! 'tis an old saying, that fortune favours fools."

His friends might, however, have spared themselves many of these envious remarks; for George himself was by no

means so well satisfied with this proposal. He rejected it at once, and employed all his rhetoric in order to convince his mother of the unsuitableness of such a union; saying, that what was principally to be regarded in marriage was not so much wealth, as parity of age and conformity of disposition; that he should neither be happy himself with Mademoiselle Degodet, nor render her so; till at length, the good Madame Dercy wondered how she could for a single instant have entertained an idea of such a match. She went therefore, at once, to Madame Saint Firmin, to entreat her to take no farther steps in the business; and did not even scruple to say that her dear George had too much merit and too many good qualities not to meet with a better match than Mademoiselle Degodet, whenever he should be inclined to marry,—namely, some lady who with as much fortune would have a greater share of beauty, and who would not be quite old

enough to be the mother of her young husband.

What was the astonishment and indignation of George's relations, when they heard of his refusal! "I knew indeed that he lacked discretion and good sense, yet I did not suppose that he would carry his stupidity so far."—"He is probably waiting for some duchess to fall in love with him."—"Nay, were even a duchess to offer herself he would not accept her."

The behaviour of George towards Mademoiselle Degodet now became that of marked respect; but the indignant fair one treated him with haughty disdain; indeed sometimes she could hardly restrain herself sufficiently so as not to show how much she was piqued. She continued to treat him thus till she had made choice of one of her numerous admirers, and then her air of disdain and mortification was converted into one of proud triumph.

CHAP. VI.

FIRST LOVE.

Who then was the favoured mortal whom Mademoiselle Degodet honoured with her preference? For some days George had met his cousin and the *ci-devant* religieuse arm in arm, when both had saluted with a smile, intended to mortify him. Soon afterwards, M. Dupré paid a visit to him and his mother.

"Well, my good cousin," said he, "you are then absolutely determined not to marry Mademoiselle Degodet? If so, I shall marry her myself. I should have some scruple as to robbing you of her, but as you give her up—in fact, why should not we clever fellows turn to our advantage the foolish conduct of such

novices as you? Yes, I am come for the express purpose of informing you of my approaching marriage. To-morrow, our bans will be published for the first time; and I thought it my duty," added he with affected kindness, "not to lose a moment in announcing my good fortune to my excellent aunt Dercy, and to my dear George, assured that so far from feeling any resentment towards me, you will offer me your sincere congratulations."

"In all truth do I," replied George, shaking him affectionately by the hand.

"After all, the woman is very well," continued Dupré; "you think that she is too old for you; I think that she is young enough for me, which is very natural as I am your elder. Besides, you would not have known what to do with her fortune, while, as for me, I assure you, I shall know how to turn it to account. In the paltry little tribunal of a country

town, I do not find myself in my element. Your observations too as to the profession of an attorney, has caused me to make some reflections to its disadvantage; for, after all, 'tis shocking to a person of any humanity to consider, that he is obliged to live at the expense of the distressed. Who knows, but that at Paris, I may obtain some brilliant situation, where I may display my talents. I am now going to the Doctor, and shall afterwards call upon La Morinière, both of whom will be overjoyed at my success; for there is so much family concord and good will among us!—And then the new relation whom I am about to give you.—Ah! you have no idea what an excellent creature she is! She has put me into entire possession of every thing—has insisted that it should be so. As for you, George, you would never have thought on those matters, but I—I forget nothing. Well, adieu! adieu! my dear aunt. You are really very kind, and I am glad to

see how interested you feel in my wel-fare."

Madame Dercy was not altogether so well satisfied at this piece of intelligence, as her son was. "How proud our cousin is!" observed she. "Had you, however, chosen ——." But these ex-pressions of regret were soon repressed, when George assured her of his entire satisfaction as to the turn events had taken. The other members of this family whom Dupré had represented as so at-tached to each other, were less pleased at his success, although their jealousy did not hinder them from paying their compliments to the intended husband of the wealthy heiress.

The wedding was celebrated with great splendour, and a grand dinner and ball were given on the happy occasion, when George conducted himself with so much kindness towards the bride, that she could not repress some rising feelings of her former partiality for him: neverthe-

less, the attention and tender assiduities of M. Dupré, banished this passing cloud of melancholy; and she became full of spirits and gaiety.

On this festive occasion, there was present among the company a young lady about eighteen or nineteen, Mademoiselle Eliza Berthoud, the daughter of a receiver of taxes. M. Berthoud, who had not resided in the town but for a few months, had been formerly a travelling agent in the commissariat at Orleans, but frequent attacks of gout having rendered him unfit for riding on horseback, he had solicited a less laborious appointment, which he obtained, without being obliged to quit that department. On his arrival at the town where he now resided, he had hired an apartment in the house of Mademoiselle Degodet, who had thought that she could do no less than invite both the father and daughter, on the present occasion. M. Berthoud being somewhat fond of

play, and of the bottle, and gay in his conversation, it was soon reported that he had been a very free liver in his youth, and a very poor economist; that his present infirmities were the consequences of his excesses, and that if he had not squandered away every thing, he might have made his fortune by furnishing army stores. If, however, scandal was so busy with the father, it had a little more respect for the daughter. Mademoiselle Eliza was certainly pretty enough to cause some disquietude in the bosoms of the other young ladies of the neighbourhood; nevertheless, they contented themselves with treating her as a simple artless girl. At first she was suspected of being rather malicious in her remarks, and not altogether so innocent as she ought to have been at her age; for expressions sometimes escaped her, that seemed intended to be severe, and at other times, some not quite becoming a young girl; but they were uttered with

such an air of harmless candour, and with so much navieté; she appeared, too, so surprised at the significant smiles which her words occasioned, that it was believed she did not comprehend the meaning of what she said.

At table, Eliza was placed by the side of George, who could not help, from the very first, contrasting his fair neighbour with the bride, whose passion he had so heroically resisted. "Had it been a young creature like this," thought he, "who had been offered to me, I should not have been so hasty in my rejection." The conversation of the young lady confirmed George in the favourable opinion with which her person had inspired him. She spoke of her father in the most respectful terms; but what more than all delighted her companion, was that during the whole time, she said nothing to the disadvantage of any one, and never ceased to express herself in terms of the highest admiration of the

good Madame Dercy. On rising from table, she went and seated herself beside the latter, and paid the greatest attentions to her, and was animated in the praises of her son. She danced several times with George, who was in raptures at her gracefulness, and modest reserve. A girl so pretty as Mademoiselle Eliza, could not fail to attract general notice; but George fancied that she seemed to give the preference to his attentions, a circumstance that contributed not a little to his satisfaction. Eliza's father quitted the company early, on account of the gout, having first requested Madame Dercy, that she would have the kindness to see his daughter home. When the ball, therefore, was over, George presented one arm to his mother, and the other to Mademoiselle; and on their way home, he so far overcame his usual timidity, that he requested permission to visit her father; a permission that was readily granted by her of whom it

was demanded, and who, in return, with the most engaging frankness, solicited the liberty of being permitted to come sometimes with her *Bonne* to pass the evening with Madame Dercy, at such times as her father was engaged with his clerks. It is easy to guess how transported George was by this petition : he slept but little during the night, and whenever he closed his eyes, it was only to dream of his interesting Eliza.

The very next day George hastened to pay his respects to M. Berthoud, and this eagerness on his part to avail himself of the liberty he had demanded, seemed to be favourably received. Eliza in her usual simple morning attire seemed more attractive in his eyes than on the preceding evening when full-dressed for the ball. Our hero conversed for a considerable time with M. Berthoud, who appeared to him to be a kind father, an intelligent man, scrupulous in the discharge of his profes-

sional duties, and endowed with considerable fortitude and philosophy, for he was very cheerful and animated in spite of his afflictions. From this first visit George returned full of friendly regard for the father; and inspired with the most tender sentiments for the daughter.

Having no secrets for his mother, he immediately confided to her the impression Mademoiselle Berthoud had made on him; and Madame Dercy, accustomed always to think as her son did, approved of this new attachment. Eliza was certainly not so wealthy as Mademoiselle Dégodet; "Yet what signifies fortune? she is young, handsome, and of an excellent disposition. Her father has a good appointment:—'tis just the wife you ought to have."

"Ah! provided she does not think me unworthy of her."

"How! unworthy of her? Do yourself justice, George; she is a charming

creature, doubtless, but you are in every respect her equal."

A mutual intercourse now took place between the two families: George went every morning to pay his respects to M. Berthoud and his daughter; and the latter came every evening to visit Madame Dercy. Our hero became more and more captivated with the goodness of heart, the intelligence, and the ingenuous disposition of his Eliza, for whom his passion daily increased, so as to be visible in his most indifferent conversation; still he could not prevail upon himself to make a formal declaration, although he thought that Mademoiselle herself divined the state of his feelings, and was not insensible to his tenderness. More than once, while accompanying her home on an evening, he had resolved to inform her of the attachment he felt; but his courage uniformly failed him, and he always found himself at the door of M. Berthoud before he could

venture to speak on the subject: all that then remained for him to do was to take a respectful leave of his mistress, and to return home out of temper with himself for not having profited by the opportunity. At length, he entreated his mother to speak for him, when Eliza, urged by Madame Dercy, authorized George to apply to her father. Thus emboldened, he lost not a moment in so important an affair, but proceeded the very next day to M. Berthoud's, when, strange to say, he actually assumed fortitude enough to solicit the hand of that gentleman's daughter.

The good-humoured Receiver seemed not at all displeased at the proposition, but he very frankly declared that he had not a *sous* to bestow upon her.

"I am not come Sir," replied our disinterested lover, "to ask what you can give with her. Who wants your

money? Is not your daughter a fortune —a treasure of herself?"

"If such be really the case," replied this good father, "we will have some talk on the subject."

George candidly laid before him the state of his circumstances: at present his income was barely sufficient for his expenditure, but as soon as the lease which he had just granted his tenant should expire, and he should take his farm into his own hands, he should do very well. In the mean time he proposed to seek some situation, of which the salary, however moderate, would enable him to live comfortably.

"Very well; I can have no objection," said M. Berthoud: "you love each other, and have my free permission to marry."

It was immediately agreed that they should write for a certificate of Eliza's birth, and another of her mother's death,

and that as soon as these necessary documents should arrive the happy day should be fixed. What rapturous news for George! He is about to marry the woman he adores, the daughter of a worthy man, his dear and virtuous Eliza, who already entertains for his mother an affection truly filial.

"What then, has he really lost his senses?" said his relations, when they heard of this intended union. "How! can he think of marrying a girl absolutely worth nothing?"

"Aye, and a cunning one too, who will deceive him completely!"

This latter was the remark of the good lady who kept shop, and who continued thus: "Yes, indeed, if I may give any credit to what has been told me by some who come from Orleans, and who seem to be very well acquainted with the family, she at least is no *Novice*."

"Do let us hear all about it," cried Madame Saint Firmin."

"Well then, it seems that the father has always been a very so-and-so character, and always in difficulties."

"O! we all know that," said the attorney, "a very bad character indeed —quite a debauchee,—a gamester, who rendered his wife quite wretched."

"But the daughter?" asked Madame Saint Firmin.

"I will not vouch for the truth of it," said Madame La Morinière, "but I am assured that she has actually had an intrigue at Orleans."

"Is it possible?"

"With an officer of the garrison there. The affair made much noise, and it was as much the desire of avoiding the rumours afloat, as it was the gout, that induced the father to solicit for his removal. They even say, too, that the interest of the daughter with both the director and the inspector of the department was exerted to carry this point—You understand me?"

"Perfectly well."

"But this is not all. Even here they say that a certain M. Frederic has been high in her good graces."

"Oh! oh! M. Frederic?"

"Yes, the same who was at your wedding, M. Dupré. It was there, you know, that George was first smitten by the simplicity and ingenuousness of this girl."

"Ingenuous with a vengeance—the sly little hypocrite!"

"While she was playing off her simplicity upon George, she was actually coquetting with Frederic; and when the former conducted her home at night, the latter followed at a distance, and joined her as soon as George had taken his leave. They stood talking together in the street for more than a quarter of an hour, and did not separate until they perceived old Madame d'Armincourt, who was returning from the party, lighted by her servant."

"But ought we not," asked the Doctor, in a tone intended to be very affectionate, "to open the eyes of the dear boy as to the unsuitableness of such a match?"

"Really I think so," said his wife.

"So do not I," said La Morinière, "e'en let the simpleton marry; so much the worse for him, so much the better for her. I will have nothing to do in the business, except it be to look on and laugh."

"Nor I either," exclaimed the man of law; "only I shall take care to give M. Berthoud, who is my lodger, his dismissal: for by suffering him to remain in my house I should seem to authorise this absurd love-affair of my cousin's."

It may easily be imagined that his own relations were not the only persons who censured our hero. That very evening Madame Saint Firmin went to several parties, and found that the whole town were diverting themselves at her

nephew's expense, and that he was the only person who was ignorant that he was the object of general remark. She here heard again all that had been before reported to her; with a variety of new and very circumstantial details. On her return home she had a long conversation with her husband on the subject; in consequence of which, the next morning, previously to visiting his patients, the Doctor proceeded to his nephew.

George, who was then preparing to go out, to call on the father of his fair Eliza, appeared not much delighted at this interruption; but what were his feelings, when, as his uncle and former guardian, M. Saint Firmin proceeded to remonstrate with him very strongly on the imprudent marriage he was about to make, and related to him all that he had heard respecting the amiable Eliza and her worthy father. The Doctor begged that his name might not be

mentioned, and that he might not be quoted as any authority for such report. Besides, it was already town-talk, as he might learn from the very first person he should question on the subject.

Every word of this discourse had been a dagger to the breast of the unfortunate George; for how could he doubt of what his uncle had so positively assured him? Without therefore saying a word on the subject to his mother, he determined to go at once to Eliza, and upbraid her with her baseness, her perfidy, and her hypocrisy.

Arrived at her house, he demanded a private conversation with her, when he gave vent to his irritated feelings, accusing her of duplicity, and becoming more violent at every word. He even declared that there was an end of all connexion between them, and that he was come for the purpose of bidding her an eternal adieu. At hearing these terrible words, she threw herself, in an

agony of grief, at his feet; conjured him not to desert her, wept, tore her hair, and employed all her eloquence in defending the character of her parent —all her tenderness, all her arts of persuasion in vindicating her own, and in convincing him that her heart was unsullied, her conduct irreproachable, and that he alone had ever excited a feeling of affection in her bosom. There was but one single fact which she admitted, namely, having visited the inspector, and the director of the *droits reunis* at Orleans; but these visits she could explain in the most satisfactory manner, and convince him how innocent they were: for so far from being ashamed of avowing them she ought rather to glory in them. Was it possible that in attempting to ruin her character, those who spread such calumnies could be so absurd as at the same time to insinuate any thing to the disadvantage of such respectable men?

"Have I then committed a crime in performing the duties of an affectionate child by soliciting a favour for my father? As to the officer of the garrison at Orleans, and M. Frederic, I can assure you, that the whole is mere fabrication. Bring hither the slanderers who have thus imposed upon your credulity, and I will confound them in your presence. And you have been able to believe—you!—Ah! I perceive it but too plainly, you have never loved me sincerely. It is I who have most reason to be indignant—yes, I who ought to renounce you for ever! But alas! what do I say? Can I endure it even in idea? Ungrateful George, such a sacrifice would cost me my life. Dercy, Dercy, how wretched does your injustice render me!" This was more than our hero could endure, and, greatly affected, he gazed on the weeping Eliza, whose tears rendered her more touching, with looks in which doubt and love

alternately succeeded each other. "Ah! thou little enchantress; what sorcery is it that thou exercisest upon me? Eliza, can you be so guilty as to deceive me? Well, well, I will believe every thing you say—I will listen only to my affection for you, and to that I now blindly abandon myself." The interview did not terminate without fresh protestations of innocence on the part of Eliza, with regard to the past; and fresh vows of tenderness and constancy for the future; and her lover departed more captivated than he had ever been before.

This scene was faithfully related by George to his mother, who was herself quite as ready to believe in the innocence of Eliza, as he himself had been. Persisting in his former intentions he continued to visit M. Berthoud and his daughter, in spite of the representations of his relations, to all of which he was deaf. He was the subject of

a number of ill-natured remarks, as he well knew, for people did not scruple to utter very significant and piquant observations even to his face; but to these he deigned no reply but silence. Mademoiselle Berthoud had re-assumed her empire over him, and he was completely her slave.

At this juncture a M. Boudet de Saint Albe, an old friend of M. Berthoud's, and who had formerly been his partner in furnishing army supplies, came to pass some time in the town; and had several long conversations with his old acquaintance, at whose house George met him, and treated him with much friendliness. Two or three times in the presence of our hero, this M. Boudet, who was still more full of pleasantry than the receiver of the *droits-reunis*, had sometimes ventured to ridicule without much reserve the folly of those who through over-scrupulousness forbear to enrich themselves; and

M. Berthoud who had always hitherto affected so much probity, seemed to enjoy the pleasantries and rather lax morality of his former colleague. This kind of jesting on such subjects both surprized and pained George; yet he dared not to remonstrate with the father of his Eliza; besides he imputed the fault more to Boudet than to the latter. Entirely occupied with his passion, he had indeed paid but little attention to the conversation of the two friends, who, from this silence, were led to suppose tnat he approved of their satire and their principles. Self-interest is so natural, so powerful, and so general a failing, that those who are ready themselves to sacrifice every thing to it, are at the same time inclined to believe that all the rest of the world are actuated by it, and that the regard they express for disinterestedness and virtue, is mere affectation and hypocrisy. On the other side, Mademoiselle Eliza

being more than ever certain of her ascendancy over George, was proud of her influence. "He is such a good obedient creature," said she to her father, "that he would obey me, even were I to order him to throw himself from the top of a steeple, or to set fire to the town."

One morning when M. Berthoud and his friend were closeted together, George was conversing with his dear Eliza, who was more than usually affectionate towards him: as he was upon the point of taking his leave, she stopped him, saying: "*Apropos.* I had almost forgotten—My father has been asking me to request a favour of you—'tis a mere trifle—at least in my opinion. With respect to ourselves, it matters little how small our income is, but it seems your family are not satisfied at my want of fortune; there is however one way of securing me some property." Then taking a paper out of the drawer

of a secretaire, she explained the matter to him. all the while making use of the most endearing and affectionate expressions towards him.

It seemed that M. Boudet de Saint Albe, her father's old colleague, had ascertained that he should be able to recover very considerable sums by way of indemnity could he but prove that at such a time one of their magazines had been burnt by the enemy. In order to complete the documents necessary to establish this claim, there was occasion for a certain number of signatures, either of clerks or military persons, who must have been witnesses of the fact; these names were to be subscribed to a *proces verbal* in which affidavit was to be made of the fire, and which would thus be legalized by the proper authorities. M. Boudet had already obtained all the requisite signatures except two; and he was come to *** for the express purpose of procuring

those through the influence of M. Berthoud. Being almost a stranger in the town, the worthy Receiver was at a loss to whom to apply; it was true he had a friend at Orleans whose scruples he knew he could overcome by sending him a cask of wine, or some such present; yet where was he to find the second signature? In this emergency his daughter had engaged to obtain that of Dercy; and this was the trifling favour which the fair Eliza now requested of her lover,—namely, to assert that he had seen the store-houses on fire.

"It is quite certain," said she, after having let him thus far into the matter, "that the storehouses were actually on fire, for I have it from my father. It would not, therefore, be committing any falsehood to attest it. It is true, you did not actually witness it, nevertheless you can have no doubt that it happened, when I affirm that such was the case, and not only myself but others also: see, here

are the signatures that have already been obtained."

Here she exerted all her arts of persuasion, sparing neither entreating words, nor still more entreating looks; while she endeavoured to convince George that by complying, he would in no manner compromise himself. He had been absent from his native place for several years, and therefore it might easily be supposed that he had been in the service, and might have been present at this event. It would be such a great advantage for both her father and herself: and then how happy she should be to have it in her power to bring her dear George a fortune equal to his own.—She finished her explanation by fresh protestations of attachment and fidelity.

Sudden indeed, and great as it was sudden, was the revolution which the language of Mademoiselle Berthoud operated in George's sentiments as she proceeded: astonishment, sorrow, and

finally contempt, displayed themselves on his countenance. Nevertheless, still irresolute, and hardly daring to give credit to his senses, he exclaimed: "I, doubtless, have misunderstood you; or rather, I am willing to believe, that you do not fully comprehend what it is that you are instructed to demand of me."

"How! do you suppose that I know not what I have been speaking of?" returned Eliza, smiling somewhat reproachfully: then added, in a still more affectionate and endearing tone, "And can you possibly hesitate to concur in what will be so greatly to the interest of both my father and myself—I, who have not scrupled to avow my attachment to you? Consider, who can be injured by this? No one but government: and do not the most respectable people every day allow themselves as much? My father says it is only tit-for-tat. O! George, if you really love me, if I have indeed any influence over you —"

While she was speaking she had taken his hand, and her eyes were fixed upon him with a look of entreaty. George, however, drew away his hand somewhat hastily, and replied in a tone of affected calmness, but which involuntarily betrayed how much he felt offended at such a proposition: "I have never yet, Eliza, wished to put the question to myself, how far I ought to give credit to the reports which I have heard to your prejudice: even supposing them all well-founded, I was still ready to pardon what was past, and to continue to love you; but now that you call upon me to come forward and give my testimony to a circumstance of which I am perfectly ignorant—'Tis an act of baseness which you demand of me.—My love for you is extinguished for ever.—Adieu!"

Although quite confounded by this reply, and by his sudden departure, Eliza did not entirely resign all hope of recovering her captive. She did not

venture to show herself to Madame Dercy, having reason to fear that as he concealed nothing from his mother, George would have informed her of all that passed. She resolved, therefore, to write to each of them: but never having seen either of these letters, we know not what justification she alleged for her conduct. George mentioned the circumstance to no one but his mother, and to her under the condition of profound secresy.

As to M. Berthoud and his worthy coadjutor, they were quite disconcerted at their well-devised plan being so unexpectedly frustrated in such a quarter; and bestowed upon our hero no very flattering epithets, for having scrupled to comply with what appeared to them a very justifiable scheme, and one which would have secured a marriage portion to the woman to whom he was so passionately attached. M. Boudet set off

almost immediately for Paris, and the Receiver of the Droit-Reunis, and his amiable daughter, quitted the place shortly afterwards.

CHAP. VII.

GEORGE OBTAINS A SITUATION IN THE SOUS-PREFECTURE.

On the arrival of spring, George returned with his mother and Margaret, to their village. These frequent journies and removals, their winter amusements, their summer excursions, and the little arrangements he was continually forming to contribute to his mother's comforts, had led him into expenses beyond his means. It was then that, in order to be able to support his mother as he had hitherto done, he thought seriously of soliciting for some small employment, the emolument of which would prove a material addition to his slender income. At first, he thought of getting his cousin La Morinière to recommend him; but

upon reflection, he conceived that it would be better to apply directly to the *Sous-Prefect*, to whom he was not altogether unknown, since he had been highly complimented by that magistrate, both personally, and by letter, when he had been the fortunate means of rescuing the poor woman and her children from destruction, at the time of the inundation.

The Sous-Prefect was a very worthy kind of man, and one who had a high opinion of his own talents, although he rarely cared to give any public proof of them, for he usually suffered the affairs of his administration to be directed entirely by his clerks; or, more properly speaking, by his wife and helpmate. During the whole ten years that he had been married, this good man had never had any other will or opinion than that of madame, who had still some pretensions to youth and beauty, was a coquette, and moreover piqued herself on being a

very clever woman, equally capable of managing her own domestic establishment, and her husband's official concerns. To say the truth, the magistrate had little else to do than to set his signature to the various papers which his lady and his principal clerk laid before him every morning, which he did with implicit confidence in their judgment and talents for business. Thus he had plenty of leisure for his own recreations, nor did he neglect to avail himself of it, for he indulged very freely in the pleasures of the table; loved play; and, if we may credit what has been reported of him, had no objection to receive personally the application of fair petitioners who solicited his influence in behalf of their relations or friends. In one thing he was allowed to possess a first-rate talent—billiards: and it is even said that, independently of the interest of madame in certain high quarters, he owed his promotion to the polite address with

which he had suffered himself to be overcome at that game by a Minister.

When George waited upon the *Sous-Prefect*, that functionary was amusing himself at his favourite game with one of his clerks, who, although a superior player, understood his real interest too well to take advantage of such an adversary. This success had put the man in office into great good-humour; besides which he had much regard for our hero. Like every one else, he considered him to be somewhat of a novice, but he did not like him at all the less on that account, for it gave him an opportunity of displaying his own superior knowledge of the world. He, therefore, ordered him to be admitted directly; and, without interrupting his game, received him with much friendliness. When George had explained to him the motives of his visit, he cried out "Very well, my dear M. Derey, I shall be truly happy to have you among us. We will at all events

contrive to find you some employment." Then, quite proud of having made a carom he added, "Have you seen my wife?"

"No," returned George.

"Then it is necessary that you should do so. I leave the management of all these kind of details to her: so lose no time in applying to her. I think too, that I heard her say, that there is a vacancy at this very moment.—See my wife; and I promise you all my interest with her."

In compliance with this advice, our hero proceeded to pay his devoirs to Madame, from whom he met with even a more gracious reception than he had from her spouse. He was a really handsome well-made fellow, and in all the bloom of youth: Madame too had heard of his having been passionately in love with Mademoiselle Eliza; and there is something naturally interesting in the idea of

a young man susceptible of so much devotion and attachment. We need not, therefore, wonder if the former lover of Mademoiselle Berthoud found favour in the eyes of his new patroness. Madame listened to his application with the most flattering attention, and was pleased to observe that it would give her great satisfaction to be able to provide for a young man of such distinguished intrepidity and extraordinary probity. Two days afterwards George received his appointment.

Notwithstanding his predilection for the country, he was now obliged to return to the town; but he was quite easy with regard to his finances, and able to provide better than ever for his mother, having, in addition to the income arising from his farm, a salary of twelve hundred francs. He was in the same office with his cousin, La Morinière, and their employment was to prepare the lists and

returns for the conscription, and to issue out and examine passports.

How was the compassionate heart of George pained, when the period of drawing for the conscription arrived, which tore from their families three fourths of the youths whose names were set down! when he was implored by mothers to devise some means of rescuing their sons from this terrible law; when he saw so many young men, some with repugnance for a military life, others compelled to abandon the employment or pursuit in which they were engaged, and some of a delicate constitution, and incapable of fatigue—all, nevertheless, obliged to depart for the army!

It was easy for the clerks of the Sous-Prefecture to favour any particular individual, by obtaining his exemption: and George suspected that La Morinière scrupled not to show this kind of partiality; a conduct which he imputed at

first to his commiseration for the unfortunate youths: yet he could not help thinking it somewhat singular, that every one of the conscripts who were thus favoured by his cousin belonged to a good family, and was a person in wealthy circumstances. With respect to himself, however he might be affected by the tears of parents, or the affliction of their children, he suffered himself to practise no artifice, nor to show any favour or preference whatever. Offers of money, however delicately made, or any presents in the shape of a bribe, he invariably rejected, or returned, though always in a respectful and civil manner. Could he have conceived that he should be excused in showing favour to any, it would have been to the poor, to those who were not capable of showing their gratitude; but he considered that it was not in his power to serve one without injuring another. The requisite number

of conscripts must be furnished at any rate, so that by obtaining the exemption of any individual, he would only have compelled some one else to serve, who would otherwise not have been called upon. While, therefore, he regretted the cruel necessity, he determined to be impartial and inflexible in the execution of his duty. This scrupulous integrity on the part of George drew down upon him the derision of his cousin and his wife, every time that they received presents of fine fish, game, or excellent wine, for which they were indebted to the generosity of those conscripts whose liberation La Morinière had obtained. Even his uncle the doctor, who occasionally condescended to furnish the son of some good patient with a certificate of bad health, accused his nephew of extreme rigour and a want of feeling.

With regard, however, to passports, George was not altogether so inflexible.

He would more than once furnish them to mercantile men whose papers were somewhat informal, but whose interests would have suffered materially by the least delay;—to young men who did not produce all the guarantees required by the law, but who were impatient to visit some cherished relation, or some dear mistress. But how then could the scrupulous and honourable George Dercy condescend to wink at such irregular proceedings? He had laid it down as a maxim never to utter or practise a falsehood, or deceive, from motives of personal interest: yet where the interests of others only were concerned, when he thought that the indulgence was no more than equitable, and that it could not possibly injure any one, then indeed he sometimes suffered natural justice to plead in the tribunal he had erected in his own bosom, and to prevail even though it was opposed to the written law. Besides he was not quite convinced in himself that the obligation, so

oppressive in his opinion, of being obliged to provide a passport, in order to pass from one place to another, was attended with such decided utility to the state as to render it indispensable to enforce it under all circumstances.

Some days after a trifling conspiracy had been detected at Paris, the news of which had been assiduously published through all the departments, by the thousand echoes of the public journals, a person called, not at his office, but at George's private residence: "Sir," said the stranger, "I have heard your willingness to oblige spoken of very highly at the inn where I have been staying; and as I am very much hurried, would you favour me by examining at once this passport?"

On looking over the paper, George perceived that it was not strictly in due form, and on mentioning this to the stranger, he observed that it caused him some agitation. The latter, encouraged

by the air of good nature and benevolence stamped upon the features of the young clerk, imagined that even if he refused to assist, he would not betray him; and relying solely upon the voucher of a favourable physiognomy, by which people so often suffer themselves to be betrayed, he ventured to confess to one whom he had never seen till that moment, that he was a political writer escaped from imprisonment. And of the truth of this story he exhibited incontestible proofs—proofs that he would not have dared to disclose to any one else: fresh orders had been issued for his detention, yet if he could but get his passport countersigned, he should not be apprehensive of being recognised on his route. Affected by the stranger's distress, George begged to be allowed a moment to consider how he should act. This person had been detained by government, that is to say, arbitrarily, and in all probability was innocent, because

they neither dared nor intended to bring him to a public trial. An imprisonment under such circumstances seemed to him to partake of the character of the former *lettres de cachet*, of which he had heard speak when very young: this consideration determined him how to act. He took the passport, and after a short absence returned with it to the stranger, formally attested and signed. The latter, filled with joy, now ventured to press him to accept as a mark of his gratitude a small paper which he had all the while been holding in his hand, and which was a rouleau of gold. But George refused to accept it, saying: "Keep your money, for if I were to take it I should fancy that I had been guilty of an action that would require a bribe."

The lady of the Sous-Prefect showed herself more and more pleased with our hero, whom she not only invited to her evening parties, but also to their country-residence. And as many of the details

of her husband's administration came under her inspection, she had frequently interviews with George on the subject of business; all which little attentions shown to him by Madame drew down upon him the railleries of the other clerks. "It is plain enough," observed they, "that you are in great favour." "Every one has his turn," said a young fellow, surveying himself with a glance of admiration in a mirror. To such remarks and jests as these George seemed to pay no attention; and this simplicity on his part served only to increase their mirth. "What an egregious simpleton it is!" said they to each other. Attentively polite and respectful towards the wife of his principal, George thought that she sometimes appeared to be rather provoked by his extreme good humour; an observation that served to explain to him the satiric hints of his companions. Too honourable to form even the idea of deceiving the worthy Sous

Prefect, it seemed to him that he should be guilty of an action as base as it was criminal, were he to return the advances of Madame ; he became, therefore, more respectful and reserved than ever, while the lady seemed more out of temper with him and at length treated him with marked contempt.—"My good friend Dercy," said one of the other clerks to him, "what an excellent, good-natured fellow you are, to let me step at once into the favour you have resigned !"

About this time it was made known one day that the Emperor was to pass through the town ; and, although he did not intend to alight, it was nevertheless expected that the Sous-Prefect, accompanied by all the other authorities, should wait to receive him at the entrance of the suburbs. The good magistrate had hardly a quarter of an hour to prepare himself for the awful interview, and was obliged on his way thither to arrange a few phrases that he fancied would

pass off as an harangue. He had, as he supposed, succeeded very well, and felt quite prepared with his oration; but at the sight of Napoleon, who remained seated in his carriage, he became quite embarrassed, and after having said, "Sire——" stopped quite short, unable to pronounce another syllable.

The emperor, laughing at his confusion, put several questions to him very abruptly: "How many conscripts has your district furnished to the army?"

"Sire, there have been——"

"How far is the new canal advanced?"

"Sire, I believe——"

"Have you any wealthy heiresses in this part?"

"Indeed, Sire——"

But as the worthy magistrate had not his helpmate to help him on this occasion, by her ready replies, he continued to stammer out some unintelligible sentences, till fresh horses having now been

put to the carriage, the Emperor, quite out of patience, drove off at a hard trot.

All the functionaries who had accompanied the Sous-Prefect witnessed the failure of his eloquence, his mortification, and the Emperor's evident displeasure. Most of them compassionated the unfortunate orator, but there were others who enjoyed the scene, and laughed in their sleeves at this notable specimen of magisterial oratory. The Sous-Prefect returned home quite as much out of temper as the Emperor himself had been, and for almost the first time since their marriage began to speak authoritatively to his wife. He declared that he would make retrenchments and reform abuses; swore that he was surrounded by a parcel of ignorant people, who could inform him of nothing, and that they were not only remiss in their duties, but accessible to bribes. Both he and Madame flattered themselves that the best way to retain their own situation, and the favour of

those in power, would be to dismiss some of their underlings, a retrenchment which would reach the ears of the emperor and induce him to pardon the unsuccessful attempt at oratory in a magistrate. Accordingly, the merits and pretensions of every one who held any employment in the office of the Sous-Prefecture were canvassed. One was exceedingly inattentive to his duties, but then he was the young fellow who had succeeded our hero in the good graces of Madame. Another was suspected of allowing himself some little illicit perquisites, but he was the constant partner of Monsieur at his favourite game of billiards. M. de la Morinière was not gifted with any talent for his situation, but then he was a respectable householder, and his wife let the Sous-Prefect's lady have good bargains, and granted her extensive credit. George was punctual, intelligent, and of unquestioned integrity; he had, however, it was said, examined some passports

without sufficient care; it was therefore determined that he should be the scape-goat, and be the one who was dismissed. Yet in order to spare his feelings, and to do it in a handsome manner, the reason assigned for his removal was the necessity of making retrenchments in this department, and his being not of so long standing as the others. Had the story been known of the author's passport he would not have been dismissed so considerately.

On his own account he cared little for the loss of this appointment, and he was even more reconciled to it, as far as it affected his mother's enjoyments, when he found that his being able to devote his whole time to her afforded the excellent Madame Dercy a satisfaction which amply made up for the relinquishment of other indulgencies. But the tranquil and contented life he now led was soon to be interrupted. In a few months they buried their faithful old Margaret, nor was it long before George

followed the remains of his affectionate parent to the tomb,—a loss that involved him in the deepest affliction.

His uncle and cousins expressed their regret at the death of so worthy a relation, but they soon thought that the excessive grief of George indicated a strange weakness of mind. "To weep on such an occasion is not only natural," observed they, "but creditable to our sensibility: still, to abandon one's self to despair, to refuse all consolation! A man must be a man: these are blows that are inevitable, and ought, therefore, to be sustained with fortitude and resignation." Ah! how little is this cold-hearted philosophy adapted to souls like those of Dercy! It is precisely because such losses are inevitable, irreparable, that they wound an affectionate heart more deeply than any other. Of what consequence to the wise man, the philosopher, the man of sensibility, is the loss of the gifts of fortune, and of those enjoyments which

have not their source in the affections? Such privations may be amply atoned for by the love and esteem of those whom we cherish—those by whom we are cherished in return. But to be robbed of the latter—these are the losses against which the efforts of our worldly philosophy are so vain! How long is it before an affectionate son can—we will not say forget his mother, but before he can accustom himself to the idea that he will behold her no more! In the society of his tender parent George regarded all that the world terms misfortune with composure, with indifference; but now he had lost his dearest consolation, his only friend: and how cheerless and gloomy did the future present itself to his imagination!

No longer attached to his native country by any ties of affection, for his other relatives had few qualities that could command his esteem, he resolved to travel. For this purpose he found the necessary arrangements with his tenant

Claude; and made up a considerable sum, which he converted into articles of merchandize; and, furnished with this venture, he designed to go to the United States.

On his taking leave of his relations, they were, as usual, neither sparing of their comments nor their advice.

"But my poor fellow, do you really conceive then that you are fit for commerce? You are going the way to ruin yourself."

"I require change of scene," said he in reply to these observations; "going abroad will be of service to me, and the only object I have in taking along with me these few trifling goods, is that they may help to defray my expenses; and who knows but that I may return home rich?"

"Rich, indeed! pray heaven that such may be the case!"

Having now paid all his visits of adieu, our hero embarked at Havre, for Boston, October the 31st, 1812.

CHAP. VIII.

FAMILY EVENTS AND CHANGES.

THREE years had passed away since George quitted Europe, and during this eventful period how many changes had taken place in France! There were also many alterations which in this interval had occurred in the family of Dercy. The ordinary events of life, the agency of our passions, our levity, and our eagerness for change and novelty, all tend to produce those variations that chequer human life: and when to these causes we add those of war, public commotion, and popular revolutions, we are still more exposed to sudden transitions of fortune. Is there a family in France that has not been affected some way or other, by the events of the years 1814 and 1815?

Neither Dercy's uncle nor his cousins resided any longer in the town where he had left them; but had successively removed to Paris, the focus of attraction.

The sensitive Alexandrine did not long enjoy the felicity of the conjugal state, a felicity obtained so late; for she died in child-bed eleven months after her marriage. It was rumoured that even this brief space was not one of constant sunshine, nor was their domestic happiness very great. Her widowed husband however was so affected by his loss, that, in order to divert his mind, he thought it adviseable to enjoy the fortune of which he was now in possession; and for this purpose sold his former appointment, and went to reside in the capital. He hired elegant apartments near the Palais Royal, and lived as a man of independent fortune. Yet it was not long before he discovered that, considerable as the property which

he had come into possession of in right of his wife might be reckoned in the country, it was very inconsiderable for Paris, where there are so many demands upon his pocket for one who has no other pursuit than amusement. The prudent Dupré thought it behoved him to make some addition to his income; for which purpose he became a general agent. Should the reader inquire what kind of profession this is, we must inform him that it is entirely one of modern invention, composed of a variety of occupations formerly carried on singly—and all more or less celebrated;—for instance that of collector of rents; of intendant in a great family, a calling which, if we may credit our dramatic writers, is not invariably that of an honest man;—of money-broker, and of legal adviser;—a profession frequently the resource of attorneys who have given up practice. M. Dupré had no clerks, but he had secretaries who

occupied an elegant office, through which was the private room of their principal. In this latter room was a splendid writing-table and secretaire, large cabinets on whose shelves were numerous boxes covered with morocco and labelled with gold letters, pointing out the peculiar purpose to which each was appropriated —*Letters*—*Instructions to be followed*—*Accounts*—*Litigations*, &c. He had numerous clients, yet notwithstanding the handsome fees and emoluments which he received, and the advantage of always holding considerable sums of money belonging to other persons in his hands, he was not satisfied. He made indeed a parade of being rich, but he always found himself, or thought himself, poor.

On the first return of the King, M. La Morinière had lost the post he held in the Sous-Prefecture; for the new Sous-Prefect would not have any person under him who had been employed by his predecessor. This move tended

a little to abate the zeal which he had at first displayed against Napoleon: in his irritation he committed himself and was suspected of *Buonapartism.* His wife felt sensibly the stagnation of trade, they became involved in difficulties, and Madame was a bankrupt. They then removed to Paris, where the latter opened a splendid milliner's shop, and her husband took up with the profession of a *Courtier-marron.* And pray, inquires the reader, what kind of profession may this be? This also is one of modern invention, but not composed of others formerly in vogue, unless you will please to rank as professions the calling of gambler, and that of *Stock-jobber,* where without any security people speculate with other persons' money. Their son, who had not profited much by his studies, but whom they thought very clever, turned himself to composing melo-dramas and vaudevilles, with some other young

persons. It was he who presided at the *de-jeuners* that took place preparatory to the readings of new pieces, who attended the rehearsals, formed acquaintance with journalists, and organized cabals in support of their productions; while his coadjutors composed the dialogue, the speeches, and the songs. During the reign of Napoleon he had taken pains to avoid the conscription, for he did not wish to fight for a despot. On the restoration, however, he was suddenly seized with an inclination for the army; and through the interest of his mother with the mistress of an officer of rank, he obtained a lieutenancy in a regiment of light infantry. Before setting out to join his regiment, he did not neglect to exhibit himself at the minor theatres, where his pieces were performed, with his newly-budding mustachios, black collar, and military pantaloons; with spurs in his boots, and a switch in his hand. Both the father and the son had their

little gallantries with the nymphs of Madame's shop; but that lady, indulgent as she was towards the follies of the latter, was not disposed to wink at the infidelities of her husband; and one day having given way to a violent fit of jealousy, in which she did not spare her principal assistant, whom she suspected of being too familiar with her spouse, she was seized with an illness that in a few days terminated her life. This event was not calculated to render La Morinière's finances more flourishing, while the expensive habits of his son reduced him to great straits, and he was more than once considerably embarrassed by being obliged to pay the debts of the lieutenant.

Dr. Saint Firmin had been the first to transplant himself to the capital; his wife having so repeatedly urged him to it, assuring him that a man of his talents was not born to vegetate and drudge on as a country practitioner. He had

therefore disposed of his connection to a young pupil, and was come to the metropolis to offer the aid of his skill and abilities to whoever might wish to employ him. Notwithstanding his talents and the reputation he brought with him, it was long before he could meet with any patients: it was to little purpose that he was attentive and obsequious; most assiduous towards the affluent, and humane and charitable towards the poor; his professional brethren paid him many attentions, but they still kept their patients to themselves. His wife, never at a loss for some expedient, proposed that they should open an establishment for wealthy invalids, who were to have apartments in the house; a scheme into which the Doctor entered at once. At the entry of one of the fauxbourgs, a large mansion was engaged, having the recommendation of being in an airy situation, and having an extensive garden, while it was at the

same time not at too great a distance from the gay and fashionable part of the town. They reckoned upon being patronized by rich country gentlemen, foreigners of rank, and German, Italian, and Dutch ladies who should be so unfortunate as to become invalids at Paris: nor did they fail to calculate upon receiving ladies from the country, who from ill health, or some other cause, might have reasons for wishing to live secluded for a short time at Paris. Madame Saint Firmin anticipated no little gratification from having to preside over such an establishment. How grateful would the convalescents be to the wife of their benefactor, and how many attentions would they make a point of showing to her! and then too, without going abroad she would always have the enjoyment of an elegant and numerous society in her own house. The times were not exactly the most propitious to such an undertaking, for the

capital was already menaced by foreign armies; strangers were in consequence every day quitting it; while other strangers, not so pacific, where daily advancing towards it; and in this season of general alarm fine ladies had no leisure to think of their nerves, or fancy themselves unwell. The Doctor however was not discouraged, but thought that it behoved him to turn even this state of things to his own account. It was not merely the barren and ungrateful study of medicine on which he founded his hopes: he flattered himself that he should be able to take advantage of the political events of the times. On the first occupation of Paris by the Allies, several officers of rank, both Frenchmen and foreigners, were placed under his care; to whom Saint Firmin showed the most assiduous and unremitted attentions. But his friends fancied there was somewhat of exaggeration and unnecessary display in his

attentions, particularly towards the Russian officers. Perhaps there was some foundation for the remark: at least it is certain that the Doctor omitted no opportunity of manifesting his zeal, and seemed to make every effort to recommend himself and to be noticed in the most powerful quarters. He even succeeded in getting himself presented, through the interest of the Russian officers who had lodged in his house, to the Emperor Alexander. So highly too were his skill and humanity spoken of,—not forgetting the amiable and philanthropic assiduities of his good lady, that the Autocrat of all the Russias thought that he could do no less than bestow on Dr. Dercy Saint Firmin the order of St. Vladimir, of the third rank. How did the Doctor's bosom swell with pride at receiving such a mark of distinction! What joy did it cause his wife! what mortification his nephews Dupré and La Morinière! Hitherto

the political opinions of Saint Firmin had not been particularly attached to any party*; not that he was altogether a weather-cock, but he prudently deliberated which side it would be most advantageous to avow himself for: the black and red ribbon which he was now entitled to wear in his button-hole determined him at once:—he became a decided royalist. It is true that his opinions seemed to take a different turn during the 'Hundred Days,' but they reassumed all their former force on the second restoration of Louis.

Thus were all three of our hero's relations come to settle themselves at Paris, with fortunes already made; the Doctor by twenty years of successful practice in the country; Dupré by the death of his wife; and La Morinière by the bankruptcy of his: but they all found that the capital was an abyss that swallowed up money. They were continually making money, and hoped to

be able to make still more; still they complained of the difficulties of the times.

Towards the end of June, 1815, M. Saint Firmin still received some foreigners into his *Maison de Santé*; among whom was an English officer who had been travelling in the south of France. This gentleman one day asked the Doctor if he was related to a M. Dercy, a banker at Marseilles, a very old man, and reported to be worth several millions. M. Saint Firmin now recollected that his father had had a brother, who was a novice in the company of the Jesuits, in 1762, the time of the dissolution of the Order, and that he was then seventeen years of age. In consequence of the event just mentioned he had left France, nor had the family had any tidings of him, so that he was supposed to be dead.

"Can it be possible." said M. Saint Firmin to himself, "that the little novice

of the Jesuits who left the country fifty-three years ago, to go to the Indies to convert the heathens, relinquished that holy calling and has been heaping up the mammon of this world." The Doctor felt himself still more interested in this intelligence when on further inquiry he discovered that the wealthy banker was an old bachelor. "Oh! if it should really be him—a fortune of several millions! If I calculate aright, he must be full seventy years old; so that we shall not have long to wait." The more he questioned the Englishman the more firmly was he persuaded that the banker at Marseilles was really his uncle, the *ci-devant* Jesuit.

"This M. Dercy," said his informer, "is quite an original, and sees nobody but those with whom he transacts business; he has for a long time been engaged in very extensive commercial concerns with foreign countries, nor has he been established at Marseilles as a

banker, above three years. When he is in an unusually gay and communicative humour he does not scruple to acknowledge that he originally intended to enter some monastic order, but a youthful intrigue that made some noise at the time induced him to alter his views. This however does not prevent him from being very religious, or rather very devout; and, between ourselves, I suspect that he still retains a good deal of the Jesuit in him. How I came to know so much of the old gentleman is, that I was addressed to him for a letter of credit; and had all the particulars which I have just related, from his own mouth."

"'Tis the very same: there can be no doubt of it," cried Saint Firmin. "An old bachelor!—Unfortunately there are several of us; still if poor George should be shipwrecked! Or if it were possible to induce the Jesuit to make a will entirely in my favour! At least

I am the only nephew: the rest are all great-nephews. Certainly I should always behave with generosity towards the other part of the family, especially poor George—that is, if he ever returns. But would it not be really a sad thing that so handsome a fortune should be divided among persons who will never make a respectable use of it? for the other two, who never spare George, are not his equal in disposition, and hardly at all superior to him in point of talent."

The Doctor did not conceive himself bound to acquaint his nephews with this piece of intelligence; and he resolved, too, not to let drop a word on the subject, even to his wife, fearing some indiscretion on her part. But he sought, and soon found out a correspondent at Marseilles—a brother physician, whose name he discovered in a general directory, and to whom he wrote under the pretence of complimenting him upon a

medical work, which the Esculapius of the Bouches du Rhone had lately published. In the postscript to this epistle, he requested to be favoured with some information relative to the rich banker. The correspondence thus commenced soon made M. Saint Firmin acquainted with enough, to convince him that the wealthy septuagenarian at Marseilles was really his uncle, the Jesuit. He lost no time, therefore, in immediately addressing a pathetic letter to this valuable relation, in which he expressed the joy he felt at having found his dear uncle, informing him, that he and his wife should come to Marseilles, in order to pay their respects, and to show him those attentions, which they felt it to be their duty to manifest. By return of post, the Doctor received the following epistle:

"Dear Nephew—I have not the least inclination to see my future heirs. Do not,

therefore, think of coming to Marseilles, as you will have only your trouble for your pains. Do you yourself remember, and take care to inform my other relations, that I will certainly disinherit whoever comes to plague me with his visits.

Your affectionate uncle,

DOMINIQUE DERCY."

"P. S. I have as great an antipathy to receiving letters, as I have to receiving visits."

The Doctor felt no inclination either to write again, or to undertake his projected journey; but he kept up his correspondence with the physician at Marseilles; from whom he, from time to time, received news of his dear uncle; which, however, rarely consisted of more than the following words: "The health of M. Dercy continues to be extremely good." The Doctor still kept the matter a profound secret from his relations and his wife.

On the 7th of September, 1815, the Doctor received a letter, with which he hurried into the room where his wife sat making some embroidery, while M. Dupré, and M. La Morinière were engaged in a game at écarté.

"News, news!" exclaimed he, "our wiseacre of a cousin is returned."

"How! George?" cried all the others in a tone of surprise.

"The very same. He landed at Bourdeaux; and writes me from Claude Lallemand's, who has given him my address; that to-morrow he will be here in Paris."

"Well, has he made his fortune?"

"What! such a one as he make a fortune! why, he has filled a whole sheet of paper in expressing the happiness he anticipates at seeing us again. Not one of you is forgotten: as to you Dupré, he condoles with you most pathetically on your loss; and with you, Morinière, on your misfortunes."

"And what misfortunes, then?"—

"Oh, I suppose he alludes to the bankruptcy, and the death of your wife."

"True, true, poor Madame La Morinière—we lived so happily together—such harmony!"

"And we, too," said Dupré, "my poor Alexandrine!"

"He congratulates you, La Morinière, on your son. Besides all this, he enlarges upon what he has felt for the sufferings to which his country has been exposed during the period of his absence; and the transport which he experiences at revisiting his native shores, after so long an absence. All this is very fine, but some other people may love their country quite as well. As to his own circumstances, he says not a syllable respecting them, he only informs me that he is quite well, but whether he is rich or poor, I have yet to learn."

"It is plain enough," said La Mo-

rinière, he is the latter; for when people do not brag of being rich, 'tis a pretty sure sign that they are poor."

"But what is he coming to do at Paris?" inquired Dupré, "I forsee that he will occasion us a great deal of trouble: he has already made away with three fourths of his little property, and we shall have to maintain him. I am really sorry for him, but it is entirely out of my power to assist him."

"And out of mine too," said La Morinière, "my unlucky dog of a son drains me of every farthing."

"The best way," said Dupré, "will be to give him a very cool reception, and let him shift for himself."

"But, my dear Sirs," observed Madame Saint Firmin, "you know not yet that he will need your assistance; who can tell but that some favourable circumstances may have enabled him to make money, in spite of his own want of talent."

"You are mistaken, aunt, I can assure you," replied the *ci-devant* attorney, "no lucky chances can ever prove of any service to those simpletons who pique themselves on thinking differently from all the rest of the world, or rather who neither know how to think, nor how to act."

"Such I fear is the case: yet my affection, my sensibility cannot endure the idea of treating him unkindly. He is our relation—shall we then shut our doors against him?"

During the whole of this dialogue the Doctor had not uttered a syllable, but rising up as soon as his wife had finished the last sentence, he said: "At least let us receive him kindly; it is our duty. Should he return rich, we shall have acted towards him as he had a right to expect: should he be poor—I am afraid that my circumstances will allow me to do as little for him as either of you can. But, after all, a good reception of

him binds us to nothing." These words had great weight with all present; so it was determined that George should be cordially welcomed home by them.

CHAP. IX.

GEORGE'S RETURN.

The affliction into which George had been at first thrown by the death of his mother had been changed by time and travelling, into a tender reminiscence, melancholy, yet delightful. In returning to France, he felt great satisfaction, as he had expressed in his letter to his uncle, at finding himself once more among his countrymen; but he was truly pained at beholding his native land still groaning under the distressing consequences of war, and of two invasions in less than fifteen months. Then consoling himself with the anticipation of more tranquil times for the future, he exclaimed: "France has suffered, and still suffers, but she is not overwhelmed:

and under a wise government she will recover her former strength.

The honest Claude had received him with the utmost cordiality: this worthy fellow had lost his wife, and married two of his daughters; twice had he suffered by military depredations, and seen his crops destroyed by foreign armies; but he relied upon providence; and hoped to be able to repair his late losses, and to marry his third daughter. George staid some time in the town where he had formerly resided with his mother; and here how great were the changes that had taken place! He seemed to be altogether among strangers: the former authorities had been replaced by others; those whom he had left young men, were now married and settled in the world; young girls were become wives and mothers; and nearly all the old, and not a few of the young also, had been snatched away by death.

Having determined upon receiving

George with due attention, La Morinière and Dupré would have gone to meet him at the stage-coach, but there were now three or four different ones established between Paris, and the place where George was to come from, and he had not specified the one by which he should travel. They went, therefore, to the Doctor's, to wait his arrival; and kept waiting until the day was considerably advanced, and still no George appeared. This put the party into ill-humour. "Why did he write to say he should come to day, if he was not certain that he should do so?"—"Oh, 'tis just like him—always some blunder or other." At length La Morinière, who had been standing at the window, cried out: "Here he is," and every one hurried out to meet him. George threw himself into the arms of his friends, and embraced them all by turns: while each received him in a characteristic manner —Dupré with an abruptness that had

something in it of heartiness and sincerity; La Morinière with an affected politeness and suavity of manner, and the Doctor with an air in which affection was mingled with a due sense of his own dignity; Madame surveyed him with a glance of examination, and thought that his person was greatly improved. But in the midst of all their expressions of joy, at beholding him again, it was evident that curiosity was the predominant feeling of the whole party.

They ascended to the drawing-room, and there their questions were redoubled.

"What I have to tell you," said George, "will furnish more than one day's conversation. My voyage has been a very interesting one—full of events agreeable and disagreeable, of successes and reverses."

"Then, let us hear of your success," said Dupré, "for it is that will afford us most satisfaction."

It was pleasant enough to see how

animated and pleased every one seemed at hearing the word 'success.'

"What a noble spectacle," continued our hero, "is that of the United States. It is there, in my opinion, that civilization has made the greatest progress, and is still proceeding to the highest pitch of perfection. There it is pure, and uncontaminated by the vices of the feudal system—the fanaticism, intolerance, and religious superstitions that have taken root so deeply in the old world."

"'Tis very justly observed," said the Doctor, as if he had studied the subject, "The United States! they almost realize the *beau-ideal* of philosophy; but after all, what have you done in this fine country?"

"Oh! I did not confine my observations alone to the States, I advanced into the interior of the continent of America, and visited the Indians, and the races of savages.'

"Savages!" exclaimed Madame Saint Firmin, "You have really seen savages? How very delightful!"

"It is among those untutored people that human nature displayed itself to me in its most unsophisticated form. Ah! how much is there of which to be ashamed, and of which to be proud, in the name of man! These poor creatures exhibit ungovernable passions, but they also display great benevolence, gratitude, and generosity."

"So all travellers inform us," said the Doctor rather impatiently; "if we may believe them your savages are half divine and half infernal; but inform us of your own personal affairs?"

"Aye," cried La Morinière, "in such a country there must be a good opening for commercial speculation, for a European who carries out a venture."

"Come," said Dupré, "tell us what you have brought home."

"Oh! a great many fine things," replied George with a smile, "that is a great many trifles, still such as I hope will please you; for I selected for each of you such articles as I thought most

likely to prove acceptable. I have got two beautiful perroquets, that can speak both French and English, for my good aunt. For my cousin, La Morinière, some Indian arms, that will be interesting to his son as a military man; some curious specimens of natural history for the Doctor; and as for you, my dear Dupré, I was much puzzled what to bring you, but I had at last the good luck to meet with a very rare little work that I have translated expressly for you; it is written by a quaker of Boston, and is entitled, "a System of Morals for the use of Attorneys."

"Confound your morals and your presents too," exclaimed the quondam man of law, with more energy than politeness.

"Dont be so violent," said the Doctor, "let George proceed with his story."

"As for me," said Madame, "I am sure I feel greatly obliged to him for his perroquets."

"But let us come to the essential point: how did your venture turn out?"

"Aye," cried all, drawing their chairs closer to him, "your venture? Did you dispose of it to considerable advantage? Did you turn it into money or goods? In one word, what has become of it?"

"What has become of it? just nothing at all."

"How! is it possible?"

"At the end of the first six months it was all gone. During our passage, the supercargo gave me to understand that I might save a great part of the duty, by smuggling some of it on shore; but I would not listen to such advice. Then I had scarcely landed before I fell in with a knave—for there are such in all countries, and under every form of government, however excellent it may be, who contrived to ease me of a great part of it. I was advised to pursue him, but I conceived that my time would be better

employed, in examining whatever was most worthy of remark, in a country where all was so new to me. Another rascal, if such a name be not too good for him, proposed to me what he termed a very advantageous scheme, namely, to exchange what goods I had left, for a cargo of blacks, that I should have an opportunity of sending directly to an English Colony.—Gracious Heaven! what a revolting proposition! what an infamous species of traffic!"

"At length I had the good fortune to become acquainted with a worthy man; but, poor fellow! he had been very unsuccessful in life, had a numerous family, and was in distressed circumstances. I contrived, however, after a great deal of trouble, to assist in extricating him from his difficulties."

"And stripped yourself of all that you had?"

"Not quite all, I had still enough to enable me to prosecute my route into

the interior, a journey that has afforded me great satisfaction, and in the course of which I had opportunity of studying the manners of the native Indians. On my return to Boston I availed myself of the little acquirements I possess, to procure a subsistence. I know English tolerably well, so that I was able to give lessons in the ancient languages, geometry and drawing, and laid by enough to pay my passage home."

"And you are returned without a sous?"

"Even so: nay if my good tenant, Claude, had not advanced me a little cash, I should not have been able to reach Paris!"

This last sentence produced a most extraordinary effect on his auditors: the chairs were all drawn back with as much precipitation as if he had said that he returned infected with the plague; and every brow became clouded.

"I was sure how it would be," whis-

pered la Moriniére to Madame. "What think you now,—is he much improved?"

"As great a blockhead as ever!" cried Duprè, in a tone sufficiently audible, yet no one cared to check him."

"Well, well," said George, who could not avoid hearing the observation, and who tried to stifle his resentment, "don't let us quarrel at our very first meeting, after so long an absence."

"It is really inconceivable," said la Moriniére, "how any man can conduct himself with so much thoughtless imprudence."

Even Madame Saint Firmin lost her usual indulgence, and remarked to George, that although formerly there was some allowance to be made for his inexperience and ignorance of the world, that at the age of nine-and-twenty such indiscretion, excusable only in a schoolboy, was absolutely intolerable. Then changing her conversation she inquired in a tone of much politeness whether

he had had the precaution to provide himself with a lodging, to which George was obliged to reply in the negative."

"I am very sorry to hear it," replied the lady, "for I doubt whether it will be in my power to accomodate you, every room in the house being occupied."

"Do not let that disturb you," returned George, "thank heaven, I need not sleep in the streets."

All the preceding rubs were however nothing in comparison with the caustic and severe lesson which our poor traveller was destined to receive from his affectionate uncle, his quondam guardian. This Mentor terminated his counsels by assuring George that he must expect no assistance from him.

"No," added his cousins, "it is absolutely out of our power to do any thing for you."

"My good friends," said he, "I should be very sorry to become a bur-

then to you; but you need not fear: my necessities are so few that I do not despair of being able to supply them myself."

Yet even this assurance that he required not their assistance did not disarm the severity of his relations, and they might have proceeded to try his patience and temper by their censures and their advice had not an incident occurred that gave quite a different tone to their feelings. Madame Saint Firmin's fille-de-chambre came in to say that a servant was waiting in the antiroom with a message for George. Prompted by curiosity to know what acquaintance her nephew could possibly have, Madame requested that he should be shewn in.

"Ah! Jacques, is it you!"

"Yes, M. Dercy, my master, Count Dharville, sends to know whether you arrived safe, and whether he shall wait

upon you to-morrow, or you call upon him at the Marquis's hotel."

The splendid livery of the servant and the words Count and Marquis operated like talismans on all present, with a magic irresistible.

"Jacques," said George, without paying the least attention to the altered expression and countenances of his relations, "tell the Count that I will come and breakfast with him to-morrow: but, that I really cannot at present give him my address, because I do not yet know where I shall be to be found."

As soon as the servant was gone the uncle and cousins of our hero all exclaimed, "Dharville! Can it be possible that your friend is related to the Marquis Dharville who has so much interest at court; and who stands so high with his Majesty?"

"It is his son."

"His son! indeed, and you have the honour of being acquainted with him?"

"We came over from America in the same vessel, and we afterwards travelled together as far as Orleans. There I took a place in the diligence to go to my tenant's, while Dharville proceeded hither."

"How! you travelled with the son of the Marquis Dharville?"

"Why not? we are very excellent friends."

"Friends!"

"Very intimate friends."

The chairs were now instantaneously drawn up as close to that of Dercy's as possible, and every countenance beamed with a smile of delight.

"And how has is it then happened that you are become the intimate friend of the young Count Dharville? Do pray let us hear all about it," said Madame Saint Firmin in a voice of endearing kindness.

"During the reign of Napoleon," said

George, "Dharville's family not anticipating the restoration of the ancient monarchy, were desirous that he should enter the service. The place of a chamberlain had been offered him, but he preferred the army. In 1814, seeking to avoid encountering those foreigners against whom he had frequently fought so valiantly, he solicited permission of his father, who was already in high favour, to travel. After having visited a great part of Italy, Germany, and England, he resolved to go over to the United States. At Boston he lodged in the same house as myself; and an intercourse of mutual civilities soon took place, although his fortune, inclinations, and pursuits, might seem to oppose a particular intimacy, for I am far from rich, neither has what is termed pleasure any great attraction for me; but when abroad it is so delightful to meet with a countryman of one's own! One of those contagious diseases so

common in America, and so particularly dangerous for strangers, broke out at Boston"

"O!" said the Doctor, with an air of self-satisfaction, "you mean an endemic Typhus, what is vulgarly called the yellow fever."

"Dharville was attacked by the disease. The fear of contagion hindered people from bestowing all the necessary attentions on the sick: I did for him all I was able, and watched day and night by his bedside; and was so fortunate as to see him recover, but scarcely was his health restored ere I myself fell ill. My dear Dharville now in his turn became my nurse, nor did he quit me an instant. His attentions were the more meritorious as he was still an invalid, and enfeebled by disease, while I when nursing him was strong and in perfect health. 'You will easily conceive how strong a friendship these mutual

good offices and acts of kindness produced between us. We vowed to be attached to each other eternally, nor do I believe that any thing will induce either to violate his oath. And although the difference between us in point of fortune, situation in society, and way of living, may not allow of an unbroken intercourse, we shall at least always remember that the one is entitled to the friendship and good services of the other. If there is not much sympathy between our tastes there is at least enough between our hearts: there is nothing that I am not ready to do for Dharville, and I can equally depend upon him."

"How interesting! how romantic! how affecting!" cried Madame.

"Interesting indeed!" said Dupré.

"Nothing can possibly be more so," added La Morinière. "But why did you not inform us in the first instance

that you had formed so brilliant and advantageous a connexion? This is really worth a thousand ventures."

"It affords me sincere pleasure, Nephew," said the Doctor, "to find that this friendship is founded on mutual virtue. Yes, my dear George, it gratifies me indeed to see that the lessons which I have bestowed upon you have not been thrown away."

"But," said Madame, "I am quite concerned to think that you should not have told the servant that you were to be found here; for we absolutely must contrive to accommodate you in our own house. I cannot think of your going to lodgings. I insist upon having a bed made up for you to-night in this room, and afterwards you can have the apartment of an English 'Milor,' who is now, thanks to the Doctor's skill, quite cured, and will set off for London to-morrow. I shall be so delighted to have my house honoured by the visits of your

excellent friend, the son of the Marquis Dharville."

"I am greatly obliged to you, Aunt", returned George with a smile: "I will avail myself of the offer."

How many expressions of regard were now lavished upon our hero during the remainder of the evening:—Good George!—dear Cousin!—how glad we are to see you again!—What a day of happiness is this!"

"We must all meet together to-morrow," said Dupré; "and let me be your host. You shall all dine with me—quite a family party—only ourselves—without any form."

"Very willingly," was the general reply.—"After all there is nothing like the society of one's own friends—our own blood, as we may say. 'Tis only in such meetings that the heart and the affections can expand themselves without restraint."

Affected with these demonstrations of

kindness our hero did not attempt to analyze their motives; but he frankly accepted both Dupré's invitation and Madame Saint Firmin's offer. The evening passed away pleasantly; nor was there any lack of a shew of cordiality. At parting there were adieus without number. "You may depend upon me," said George; "And you my dear cousin," was the reply, "may depend eternally upon us."

CHAP. X.

GEORGE'S INTEREST EXERTED IN BEHALF OF HIS FRIENDS.

It is almost impossible to form an idea of all the little attentions which Madame Saint Firmin shewed her nephew. Every domestic was put into requisition in order to wait upon him, nor did even the Doctor's best patient meet with such an excess of assiduity.

Hardly was George dressed, the next day, before he received a visit from La Morinière, who with an expression of tender solicitude inquired how he had rested: then passing at once to the business that had brought him, he said that, that very morning while anticipating the pleasure of seeing his dear cousin, a thought had struck him that

might be very advantageous for his son the sub-lieutenant. "You know," continued he, "what an excellent son he is, and how well he deserves all that I can do for him. Now he has just informed me that there is a lieutenancy vacant in his regiment. If you would give us a lift I am sure he would obtain it. You could mention it to your friend the Count, who would make interest with his father; the Marquis would speak to the minister of the war department; and then the business is done!"

George without hesitation promised his cousin his good offices.

"But no time is to be lost."

"Well, well, it shall be done this very morning."

"Ah! what a kind, good creature you are!"

The very next minute after this request had been granted, Dupré was announced: he too was come to pay a morning visit to his dear cousin. After

many affectionate compliments, he took Dercy aside, and said, "I am sure it must be painful to your feelings my good George, you that interest yourself so warmly in all that relates to our family, to see me in the profession I now follow. But what is to be done? circumstances have compelled me— However I am anxious to give it up. I am ambitious of holding some honourable employment in one of our tribunals. And this very night I have been thinking that one of the Registers of the *Tribunal de Première Instance,* is very old. Now such a situation as that would suit me exactly. I should then dispose of my office, and with the salary and perquisites of that place should be able to live very comfortably and respectably. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly."

"Well then, will you serve me? will you promise to speak in my behalf to your friend Dharville?"

"But what influence can he possibly have in such a business," enquired George, with a smile, "Do you imagine that he has any acquaintance with black-gowns, and wigs?"

"But the influence of the Marquis, his father, extends everywhere: there is no department of the administration where he cannot provide for his friends: a single word from him to the Procureur-General, and to the Minister of Justice, and the situation is mine."

"Well, well, with all my heart."

"Worthy lad!" exclaimed Dupré, the tears starting in his eyes, and cordially shaking the hand of his new patron.

The next visitor was the Doctor, who came into the room to pay his respects to Dercy, and was not a little surprised to find that he had been anticipated in this act of politeness by his two nephews. They all now proceeded to the sitting-room of Madame Saint Firmin; when George,

who made no mystery of what had passed, assured his cousins that their requests should be attended to that very morning.

"What, asking favours already, gentlemen!" said the Doctor, in a reproachful tone; "you are determined not to lose a single moment. Ah! for heaven's sake let him have time to breathe. I, too, have been reflecting upon the advantages which may result from the honourable friendship my nephew has formed with the Count; yet it is not for me, but for himself, that I wish to see him avail himself of this favourable circumstance. Our good George must obtain some place in the administration, through the influence of the Count."

"Yes," said Madame, "this is what he must do; and then, when he has once provided for himself, nothing will be more easy for him than to obtain for the Doctor the favour of the Minister."

"My dear," cried Saint Firmin, reproachfully, "do not you follow the ex-

ample of those who shall be nameless. For myself I ask for nothing—I have never been in the habit of soliciting favours. I know my nephew's disposition exceedingly well: he will never be ungrateful, will never forget his own family."

"Never, never; I shall feel myself most happy to render you all the service in my power. Since too my uncle advises me to it, I will see what I can do for myself. In fact, my little estate is not very profitable just now; for my poor tenant must have time to recover himself from the losses he has sustained. Besides, I do not wish to live without some occupation. I am now going to Dharville: therefore, my dear aunt, do not wait for me, but I will join you at Dupré's at five o'clock, when I hope to be the bearer of good news."

M. Dupré had not been sparing in the entertainment he prepared in honour of our newly-returned traveller. The table

was laid for five, in his own cabinet; the plate, napkins, &c. were exceedingly elegant; three glasses, of different sizes, were set before the plate of each guest; the wines for dinner, and for the desert, were placed upon a side-table; and two bottles of champaigne were set to cool in ice-pails. The dinner had been ordered at an eminent restaurateur's in the neighbourhood; and in passing through the drawing-room an elegant desert was seen, set out quite ready. That he might have no interruption during this tasty banquet, the host had dismissed all his people in the office early in the afternoon.

At five o'clock precisely, all the party, except our hero, were assembled, although it was principally out of respect to him that the others had been so punctual; no one, however, cared to find fault with this delay on his part.

"Doubtless, he is detained by some very important business."

"Perhaps, by some relating to ourselves."

Then every one began to launch out into praise of him :—

"What signifies it, though he has not shown much skill in his little commercial enterprize, if he does but succeed in obtaining patronage?"

"I always told you that he was not so ignorant of the world as you took him to be."

"We shall see," said the Doctor; "if he will but be governed by me, his fortune is made."

"Aye, and he will be able to make ours too;" added his wife.

"Now, pray my dear—to hear you, one would really imagine that I needed my nephew's interest."

"I do not say exactly so; but he is a most excellent young man."

"He is so indeed; but I wish he would come."

"'Tis getting late."

"The dinner will be quite cold."

"We certainly can't set down without him."

"How can you hint at such a thing? For my own part I don't think of dinner till I see him."

"I hope no accident has happened to him."

"The very idea of such a thing alarms me."

"Let us hope not."

In conversation of this kind did the party seek to beguile their impatience; when, at length, Dercy made his appearance, and anxiety was converted into joy.

"Let dinner be served instantly," said Dupré to the *garçon* of the restaurateur.

"I beg you a thousand pardons for having kept you waiting so long," said George, wiping his face with his handkerchief; "I have been running about to so many places; but 'tis on your ac-

count, being determined you should not find fault with me."

"Find fault with you!—we shall never have reason to do that," said La Morinière.

"Come, come, let us be seated," said their host; "we shall find time enough to talk, both at dinner and afterwards: we have still a jovial evening to look forward to."

"I flatter myself," said Dercy, the first interval he could find in the important occupation of the table; "I flatter myself you will allow that I have conducted myself both like a kind relation and an honest man."

"Oh! we do not doubt it. What have you done?—Is my son to be a lieutenant?"

"Shall I have the place that I mentioned to you?"

"Good heavens! gentlemen, how very impatient you are," said the Doctor.

"Not more impatient than our worthy cousin himself is to serve us. Let me help you to a glass of Madeira, M. Dercy, after your soup. Well, we are now listening to you."

"It is too late to apply to the Marquis Dharville: he has been appointed to a mission, a very important embassy in the north, and sets out this very evening."

"Confoundedly awkward!"

"Exceedingly unfortunate!"

"But his son remains in Paris."

"Yet that is by no means the same thing."

"I beg your pardon: you have no idea what an excellent friend Dharville is. He will do any thing to serve me: he insisted upon introducing me to his father. At first I hesitated; but my wish to be of service to you overcame my timidity. I had heard that the Marquis was full of hauteur, very vain of his rank, and entertained all the worst prejudices of aristocracy; but I was agreeably

surprised to find him courteous and affable. He thanked me very cordially for the affectionate attentions I had shown his son, and assured me that our mutual friendship afforded him great satisfaction; that he would sanction whatever Dharville might engage to do for me in his absence; and he gave him full permission to make use of his name in promoting my interests."

"This is quite delightful."

"You are now afloat."

"Take some of these partridge *filets*, my dear Dercy, and then proceed with your story."

"I thought that I ought to mention your wishes at once, and therefore informed the Marquis of what La Morinière had asked me to solicit for his son, and you, Dupré, for yourself. The Marquis smiled very graciously and said: 'Well, really, you are an excellent relation.' He then sent for his secretary, and dictated two letters, one to the Secretary of the War-

office, the other to a person who has great influence with the *Ministère de la Justice*. My friend Dharville proposed to accompany me to the parties to whom the letters were addressed, in order to back them by speaking personally in my behalf; and we accordingly set out together."

"This is what I call readiness to serve a friend."

"Hand some Bourdeaux to M. Dercy: —well, George, how did you succeed with the Minister of Justice?"

"We went first to the office of the Secretary of the War Department—"

"I beg your pardon."

"Is he not a worthy fellow!" exclaimed La Morinière in the joy of his heart; "well, what did you do at the Secretary's?"

"We there ascertained that there actually was the vacancy you mentioned."

"I was quite sure of it."

"But at the same time it was very

politely hinted to us that your son could not be appointed without passing over officers of longer standing."

"Well, but this did not hinder the Count from urging that the recommendation of his father should be complied with?"

"No; Dharville has so much friendship for me, and is so inconsiderate, that he would have gone at once to the Minister of the War Department, and pressed his request; but I dissuaded him from it."

"How!—you dissuaded him from it!"

"Certainly: I thought that you would be sorry should your son owe his promotion to an act of injustice."

"Then I am confoundedly obliged to you. I could have informed you myself that my son has no pretensions on the score of seniority. Why the devil should you have such squeamish scruples, if I have none?"

"Come, come, nephew," said the Doc-

tor, "for my part I highly commend George for the delicacy he has displayed: it does him honour."

To this observation La Morinière condescended to make no reply, but proceeded to devour his dinner in sulkiness.

"A great honour indeed," said Dupré: "but pray proceed; I long to know how you and your friend succeeded at the *Ministère de la Justice.*"

"There we were received with more respect, if possible, than at the former place. After reading the Marquis's letter, they did not wait for me to explain myself; but, understanding that I came to speak in favour of a gentleman who had formerly practised the law, they offered me something still better than what you asked, and what I instantly accepted."

"Indeed! what is it then?"

"The situation of Judge in the *Tribunal de Première Instance* at * * *. Conceiving that it would be infinitely more gratifying to you to hold an office

of such respectability in a place where you have so long resided, and are so well known, I at once closed with this proposal. As soon, therefore, as you shall have given the necessary testimonials and references, and the usual preliminary forms have been passed, you will receive your appointment."

"Confound it! this is serving me with a vengeance!" cried Dupré, in a voice indicative both of astonishment and anger; "and do you really suppose that I will give up my present concern for the paltry place of a country justice? I will never do it. Procure me the place of a Register at Paris, and I am satisfied."

"I am sorry I have offended," returned George, somewhat disconcerted; "but I thought I was acting for the best. And I am the more vexed now that what I have done does not meet your approval, because while we were there a young man made application for the very situation which you seem so much to regret; and, as he is recommended by the party

who now holds it, he received almost a definitive promise; so that the thing may be considered as settled."

"And you made not the least objection?"

"No: I was so pleased at the idea of your becoming a magistrate."

"Why then I am very finely served, that's all."

After this explanation, the host did not press his guest to let him help him to any of the dishes before him, or any of the wines.

"Surely, after all," said La Morinière, "you must be hoaxing us: or can you really be such a simpleton?"

"Cousin La Morinière, I am not in the habit of hoaxing any body, as you term it; and if for thinking that you would both of you participate in those sentiments of which I am myself proud, I am a simpleton, I must plead guilty to the charge. After running about to three places, Dharville and I returned to the

Marquis to acquaint him with our success; and I am happy to say that he entirely approves of the manner in which I had acted."

"So do I too, George," said the Doctor, "I certainly approve of it; but I hope that at your second interview with the Marquis you did not forget to say a word for yourself."

"Why, indeed," observed Dupré, drily, "after M. Dercy had managed other people's affairs so cleverly, there is no doubt but that he acted with equal sagacity for himself. I dare say he has, in conformity with your advice, applied for some valuable appointment. Pray let us hear your success, Mr. George."

"I trust," said the Doctor, "that my nephew, George, has not forgotten the good advice I gave him last night, and am anxious to know what he has done on his own account."

"What have I done? why really I must say nothing yet."

"How!"

"Every thing cannot be accomplished at once, and to-day I have been entirely engaged with other people's affairs."

"Yes, and to a very excellent purpose."

"There is no need for precipitation," continued our hero, without paying attention either to Dupré's remark, or to La Morinière's significant shrug.

"But the Marquis leaves town to-night," said the Doctor.

"True, but has he not told his son that he was quite at liberty to make use of his name if it can be of service to me? Besides, it was getting late; I was forced to take my leave and hurry here, that I might not keep you waiting longer. To-morrow, or the day after, or some time or other, I shall speak to Dharville."

"Oh! it will do very well," replied his uncle drily in his turn. "This indifference is certainly the way to get on rapidly in the world."

"And to serve one's family too," added Madame Saint Firmin.

As M. Dupré was not at all in the humour to prolong either the repast or the conversation, the company rose from table soon after the dessert had been set on, and retired to the drawing-room.

La Morinière, hardly giving himself time to drink a cup of coffee, slunk away; the Doctor recollected that he had a patient to visit; and his wife requested him to set her down at the house of a lady of her acquaintance; so that of the five persons of whom the party consisted there remained only George and his cousin Dupré tête-a-tête, the latter of whom walked backwards and forwards several turns, with his hands behind him; then stopping suddenly, and leaning his elbow on the chimney-piece, he said, "As the rest of the company have left us, M. Dercy, and as thanks to your excellent manage-

ment, I must, it seems, remain what I now am, you will excuse me if I attend to business: I have some letters to write." George requested that his cousin would not neglect business on his account, and immediately took his leave.

He determined to go and finish the evening at the theatre; and on his way thither could not help reflecting on the behaviour of his relations towards him since his return, in which he perceived a changeableness that made him smile. "But they themselves," thought he, "are not changed at all!" The performance was the comedy of '*The Two Sons-in-law*:' and George remarked that in the scenes where the two sons behave with fawning hypocrisy or brutal rudeness to their father-in-law, that the audience expressed their indignation; and that on the contrary every one seemed greatly affected in those scenes where the unhappy father lamented the

ingratitude of his children. "Alas," said our hero mentally, "at a theatre people admire and applaud generous sentiments, and manifest their detestation of base and interested characters; but are they therefore more generous and disinterested in their own families, and in their dealings with the world?" Scarcely had he made this reflection when his cousin La Morinière, who was sitting in the first circle beside an elegantly dressed woman, caught his eye:—he who had so recently expressed his anger in no measured terms because his son had not been put over the head of another person; and who was now applauding with vehemence the fine moral maxims that he heard from the stage.

CHAP. XI.

GEORGE OBTAINS A PLACE FOR HIMSELF.

NOTWITHSTANDING that the Marquis was gone abroad, he had left a warm patron for our hero, in the person of his son. Descended from one of the first families of the old nobility, and already master of a considerable property that he inherited in his mother's right, the only son of a nobleman in high credit, who was just appointed to a brilliant embassy; and destined to be one day a peer of France, the Count Dharville, was a young man of noble sentiments, sin cere and generous. His personal qualities alone would have obtained for him that respect which otherwise would have been bestowed on him in consideration

of his father's rank; but favoured by fortune, idolized by his relations, accustomed from infancy to have all his desires gratified, surrounded by flatterers and hangers-on, he was in fact quite a spoiled child, very full of levity and *etourderie,* and not quite free from self-conceit; and he was besides incessantly hurried away by his immoderate love of pleasure. Within the fortnight that he had returned to Paris, he had renewed his former course of life, found out all his old friends, and formed new attachments and *liaisons.*

One morning George called upon Dharville, who, after receiving him with the utmost cordiality, said, "What ails you, you are quite gloomy to-day?"

"I am so: my uncle is continually pestering me."

"What do you mean?"

"He wants me to ask a favour."

"To ask whom?"

"Yourself."

"And does that vex you? Why you absolutely make me laugh; but no, I am very angry with you:—you have a favour to ask of me, and you scruple to do it! Come let me hear what it is."

"My uncle blames me very much for not having availed myself of the Marquis's kindness; and says that your interest would procure me some appointment."

"And he is very much in the right; I am more than half tempted to scold you myself. But I ought rather to reproach myself for not having yet thought of you.—However, it shall be done directly;—let us concert together and take our steps without farther loss of time."

"Now this is exactly what I dread. You are going to drag me from minister to minister as a poor place-hunter. How shall I muster sufficient assurance? While it was only for other people I

could endure to be thought a beggar, but never can I prevail upon myself to be looked upon as one on my own account?"

"Ah! this is so like you! You have but one fault—modesty carried to an excess that is absolutely ridiculous. No I do not intend to carry you as a humble petitioner, but to take you by the hand as my friend. Ah! I have it—a very excellent idea—we will apply to him at once. It is the Duke of * * *, one of the first men in the state: he has extensive influence in the ministry, and places without number at his disposal, to which he is in the habit of naming those young men, whose talents and abilities he has proved. He entertains a flattering partiality for your humble servant; sometimes we take our bottle together, and then I hear all his former freaks; and, I in return, make no secret to him of my own indiscretions:—oh! he is one of the most sensible men in

Europe. Notwithstanding his age, he is still equal to the fatigues both of pleasure and business: he is a widower, and has no children. Even in his younger days his master-passion was the desire of obtaining influence and power, and now there is nothing that he would not do in order to secure them. It is said that in every situation into which he has been thrown—as an emigrant, or as an envoy; under Napoleon, or since the restoration of Louis; he has always pushed his talent for finesse and the art of accommodating himself to circumstances to a tolerable extent, and has allowed some latitude to his conscience; yet after, all, is he to be blamed on this account if the state has been a gainer by it? Besides, he is at the bottom an excellent character; noble and delicate in all his private transactions, and generous even to a fault."

George, who listened attentively to

this eulogium, could not help thinking that in some points it did not paint the subject of it in the most flattering colours. "What would you say then," asked his friend, "to those who exhibit not this contrariety of good and bad, but merely the latter? I must however now go and find my worthy Duke. And apropos! I shall have a stylish concern to-morrow: I am going to give a tasty *dejeuner* at Beauvilliers to a few friends, by way of letting the world know that I am come back among them again. So I shall expect you to join us:—be sure you do not fail."

In the evening Dharville wrote to say that he had not been able to see his Grace, but that he had left word at his hotel to say that the next evening he should have the honour of presenting his friend Dercy to him at the opera; whither he should take him after the dejeuner. Our Novice was so ignorant of high life as to feel some surprize at

hearing that they were to proceed from breakfast to the opera, and that the Count had selected the latter place as the place where he should introduce him for the first time to the minister.

Knowing that he was to see the Duke in the evening, George proceeded to his friend's déjeuner in full dress,—a black coat, silk waistcoat, and breeches, with gold knee and shoe buckles, an opera-hat under his arm, and an elegant cravat. From what Dharville had said, he expected to find only two or three guests, how greatly then was he surprised at being ushered into a splendid saloon, where from twenty to thirty young men, and five or six ladies, all very elegantly dressed, and all apparently in most excellent humour, were assembled. The costume of our hero, which was somewhat too much out of date to be fashionable, and the extreme respect with which he paid his compliments to the ladies, caused most of the company to

stare at him as an oddity; nor was it long before some of them seemed greatly disposed to amuse themselves at his expense. "Fresh imported from the country," whispered one of the ladies, "let us quiz him." Fortunately Dharville heard this proposition, and he very adroitly hindered the execution of it by paying so much attention to his friend, and saying so many handsome things of him, that no one ventured any observation against so evident a favourite of the Count's; but those who were at first most disposed to ridicule him, became now most profuse in their attentions, and their expressions of regard.

This déjeuner was so solid and so sumptuous, that Dupré's dinner was nothing in comparison with it. Nothing was wanting to render it a scene of festivity; one of the ladies, who was prima donna at the Italian theatre, was easily prevailed upon to display her talents; and her voice and style of singing, drew

forth repeated 'bravas!' from the whole company. George, who had not forgotten the important affair of the introduction to the Duke, now became anxious that the entertainment, which was beginning to degenerate into not the most temperate of revels, should be broken up; but the rest of the company seemed not to pay any attention to the flight of time; till at length, quite impatient, he looked at his watch, and whispered Dharville, "It is just upon seven."

"There is still plenty of time," replied the Count, filling his glass with Champaigne.

"Seven o'clock!" cried two of the ladies, rising with precipitation; "Ah! good heavens! we shall be fined:" and immediately catching up their shawls and bonnets, they left the company attended by two of the gentlemen, who conducted them to their carriage.

After some time, yielding to the urgent entreaties of our hero, Dharville

arose, requesting the rest of the party not to disturb themselves, saying, that a very important engagement obliged him and his friend to proceed to the opera; but that in order to terminate with due jollity, a day so happily commenced, they would soon return and join them in taking punch. Dercy observed, with pain, that the Count had some difficulty in preserving his equilibrium, and could not help whispering to him his apprehensions, to which the latter replied aloud, that it was a mere trifle, and the air would soon set all right; then humming the last air which the Signora had favoured them by singing, he quitted the room, holding George's arm.

Arrived at the opera, Dharville ordered to be shown into the Duke's box, where they found his Grace alone, seated, or rather stretched out in front of the box, fast asleep, with his head on his bosom. Our visitors took especial care not to disturb his dignified repose, and there-

fore took their places very quietly on the back seat, although not all the noise of the singers, of a numerous chorus, and a loud orchestra, seemed to affect the sleeper. But no sooner did the ballet commence, than the Duke seemed to wake spontaneously; and then the Count, taking our hero by the hand, said, "My dear Duke, allow me to present to you the estimable friend whom I had the honour of mentioning to your Grace."

"Very good, very good," replied the minister, "but let us look here." Then putting to his eye a most elegant opera-glass, he continued to gaze at the dancers with extreme attention. George was not a little astonished at recognising among these dancers, the two ladies who had left them so abruptly; a discovery that certainly did not tend to make him think more favourably of the company to which he had been admitted. When this dance was concluded, and the

curtain dropped, preparatory to the grand *Ballet d'action,* which was to finish the entertainment, the box-door was opened, and George saw a string of visitors who came to pay their compliments to the Duke: among these were old courtiers, individuals of high rank in the administration, placemen, foreigners of distinction, diplomatists, secretaries, with envoys from almost every state, and they were so numerous, that the corridor was quite blocked up, for each visitor stood in his turn at the door, and appeared to be in no hurry to press on. "Good heavens!" thought George, "can it be possible that our ministers and statesmen give audiences at the opera!" The most familiar of these visitors ventured to criticise the singers, the dancers, and even to make their remarks on the ladies in the house, to which the Duke, who continued seated the whole time, was either silent, or replied only by monosyllables.

George sat quite still without venturing either to stir or to speak, and not a little embarrassed by the absence of his friend who was gone to promenade in the saloon. At length the curtain drew up for the grand ballet, and instantly all the visitors retired, leaving him tête-à-tête with his Grace, who said, "Where is that giddy fellow, Dharville?"

"I do not know—I believe—that is I fear—Oh! here he is!" and a very great relief to him was the return of the Count, who now again offered to introduce Darcy to his Grace. "Presently—after the act," was the reply, for the Duke's attention was again riveted to the stage, where the dance seemed to afford him the interest of that stimulus necessary to minds goaded by over-excitement. The act being over, Dharville again made an attempt, although not very eloquently, nor was he exactly in the best state for such an office. "My dear Duke, this is my very good friend M. George Dercy, a gen

tleman of very great merit:—became acquainted with him in the United States—that is in America. Really you must provide for him—you will thank me for the opportunity of serving him.—Put him to the test: I am sure you will be satisfied with him. My father too interests himself for him, and it is in his name that I recommend him." The Duke cast a scrutinizing glance upon George, while the Count proceeded: "Except in point of sincerity, there is not much resemblance between M. Dercy and myself. I am, as your Grace well knows, a very sad fellow, such as you yourself have been, and I believe, I may say, are still. My friend George is both industrious and well-informed; capable of planning a scheme, and of executing it when he has done—such as you yourself have been and still are. I resemble you in your defects—he in your good qualities."

"Well, well!" said the Duke, again applying his glass to his eye, and looking

at the company in the boxes, "let him wait upon me to-morrow, I shall leave orders to have him admitted."

George bowed to his Grace, and he and Dharville immediately retired. "Well," cried the latter, "what do you think of my harangue? To-morrow I will be still more warm in your praises; but come let us go and take our punch, and finish our déjeuner." George would fain have excused himself, but Dharville would take no refusal, and he was obliged to comply.

At the opera the Duke seemed to George to be very grave, yet his gravity was that of a vain man, disgusted with himself and others, and of a character by no means calculated to make a favourable impression on a reflecting mind; but the gravity which he displayed the following day had something in it noble and dignified. His grace had just been examining a paper of one of his principal secretaries, and was asking for some

explanations, in a polite yet somewhat proud tone, to which the secretary replied with the utmost respect, and afterwards retired. The Duke then turned towards our hero, whom he examined with a more penetrating eye than on the preceding evening; and after Dharville, who now expressed himself less confusedly than at the first introduction, had again presented him, his Grace said, "You have travelled in America?" and began to put to him several questions relative to what he had remarked in the government and national character of the people. To which queries George replied admirably well, his confidence gaining ground as he proceeded; and his answers seemed to give satisfaction. After a silence of some moments, during which the Duke still kept his eyes fixed on him, that nobleman informed him that he had something that he should wish to intrust him with; then taking a bundle of papers off a table, he said,

"Bring me these again in two days." The next instant he turned to Dharville, and began to converse with him on the performance of the evening before—of the many beautiful women he had observed in the boxes, and some antiquated dowagers, whom he remembered at the age of their daughters, and who, Dharville protested, never could have been young.

George was so fortunate as to succeed in the task confided to him by the minister; and was soon after appointed to a place in his private cabinet.

CHAP. XII.

GEORGE'S CONDUCT IN HIS NEW OFFICE.

To have a post in the cabinet of a minister of state is no unimportant distinction; nevertheless, many of those who are so fortunate as to possess it, are not content without aspiring to become the great man's private secretary; although, after all, the functions of such personages are not always the most dignified in the world, being not unfrequently confined to writing letters of audience, and sending out invitations for the cabinet dinners, or the private parties of the man in power. Such, however, was not the employment assigned to our hero, for having succeeded in his first task he was entrusted with more important matters, all of which he executed with equal satis-

faction to his Grace. His anxiety to fulfil his duty, and his desire to manifest his gratitude, inspired him with zeal; and he made every day fresh progress in the Duke's confidence and esteem. It is true that in the midst of all his marks of regard, that nobleman still maintained with Dercy the same dignified and distant air as with all his other secretaries.

In his new situation George had an opportunity of observing all those immediately surrounding or employed by the minister; and he here beheld on a large scale what he had before seen on a small one, while he was in the office of the Sous-Prefecture, at * * *. All his fellow clerks, from the minister's principal secretary down to the mere copiers of dispatches, exhibited to him striking examples of self-conceit, cupidity, and artifice in pushing their own interests. One exerted himself to

make money, another aspired to a lucrative appointment; the object of a third was the decoration of an order, and a ribbon to wear at a button hole; but all were blindly attached to the existing state of things, and submissively devoted to the minister. George remembered that at the time he was setting out for America, he had left all his acquaintance in the *bureau* of the Sous-Prefecture, filled with admiration for the Emperor, and with attachment towards the Sous-Prefect himself; yet if he might rely on what he had heard from others, this admiration was in 1814 changed into avowed hatred, and their attachment into persecutions and denunciations against their former principals in office.

But what did our hero's relatives say when they first learnt the news of his appointment? Both La Morinière, and Dupré, according to their laudable custom, displayed their envy and jealousy of his

good luck. "Diable!" cried the former, "then the fellow has, it seems, something to recommend him after all!"

"He is not so ignorant of the world, as you imagine," returned the other; "he knows very well how to forward his own interests; it is only when those of his friends are at stake that he commits his confounded blunders."

The Doctor received the intelligence very differently, for he regarded this first step of his nephew's towards promotion as entirely his own work, and was therefore quite proud of, and delighted with it. Was it not, in fact, in consequence of his repeated advice, that George had at length determined to apply formally to his friend Dharville, through whose means he had been introduced to the Duke? Nor was he without hope, that George's credit with the minister would redound to his own advantage, and that his nephew would become his patron; which patronage would be so much the

more desirable, as he did not doubt but that he should always be able to manage just as he pleased one who was of so unsuspicious and disinterested a character as our good Dercy. Madame Saint Firmin participated in all the hopes and views of her husband, and was even for carrying them farther, for she would have wished that George should introduce his uncle, and perhaps herself too, to the minister. She already fancied the Doctor appointed physician to his Grace, in high repute at court, nay even first physician to the king. The worthy Esculapius endeavoured to repress this vivacity of imagination and these sanguine hopes on the part of his lady; and pointed out to her how necessary it was for them to proceed with circumspection, and not hazard a single step, without having previously ascertained the solidity of the ground on which they were about to tread. In the Doctor's opinion, the essential point was to keep a watch-

ful eye over George, to tutor him well how to act, and to get him never to do any thing without first consulting a person of his judgment, and knowledge of men and the world. Dercy was no longer an inmate at his uncle's, but had hired handsome though not very extensive apartments; however, the intercourse between them was uninterrupted, for he very frequently called to pay his respects to Madame Saint Firmin, and the Doctor hardly ever went his rounds to his patients, without making a visit to his nephew, for the purpose of moulding him to his views, in doing which he spared neither advice nor remonstrances. The principal point on which he more particularly dwelt, was recommending him to show his assiduity and devotion to the minister; although Dercy needed this counsel less than any other, being sufficiently inclined to follow it of his own accord.

The public journals were already on

the side of government; for the ministry had calculated that it would be adviseable to avail themselves of their influence; and in addition to official articles, they took care that others should appear in them, highly favourable to their views, and written by parties in whom they could confide. One day the Duke put into Dercy's hand some papers on which he ordered him to compose an article of two or three pages, to be sent secretly to one of these journals. Almost the first words of the minister filled George with alarm; for that which it was required of him to support was totally at variance both with his political opinions and his principles of morality, and he was still too much of a Novice to be able to write in favour of one side of the question while he was privately attached to the other. He even ventured to acquaint the Duke with his scruples:—nay, still more, he had the indiscretion to entreat his Grace to impose neither upon

himself nor any one else what seemed to him so little honourable. Casting an angry look at his self-established censor, the minister took the papers hastily out of his hands, "I see you do not understand me;" then suddenly checking his anger, he added in a bantering tone, "You young fellows, who set yourselves up for moralists and philosophers, are shocked at such trifles!—But I will not trouble you: you would only make bungling work of it; and I shall soon find those who will undertake it."

"I fear your Grace will not succeed so readily."

At this mal-apropos remark the anger of the Duke was about to break out afresh: but with admirable self-possession he converted the gathering frown into a smile, and changing the subject proceeded to speak in a tone of affability on other matters, giving him some government papers of detail, that were accepted with readiness, as they

contained nothing repugnant to the rigid principles of our hero. But did the Duke, after what had passed, still retain in his cabinet a man so little accommodating in his principles, and so little disposed to lend himself to his views? Yes; his Grace was too adroit a politician not to avail himself of every species of merit. "I see very well," said he, "that I cannot depend upon this M. Dercy on every occasion; but what then? I can always make use of him when all that I require is a man of probity, of information, and industry."

Every morning George related to his uncle, without the least disguise, all that passed between the Duke and himself, and how he stood with him; and for the most part the Doctor had no reason to be dissatisfied with his nephew's docility, and readiness in following his advice. "Come, come," said he, "he is growing clever: we shall make something of him after all." But how great

was his alarm when he heard from him that he had dared to refuse to execute a task imposed upon him by his patron. "Ah! you have advanced finely indeed!" exclaimed Saint Firmin. "You are returning fast to your old simpleton ways. Does it become such a one as you to have an opinion of your own, or to dare to remonstrate when a man in power commands you any thing? Are you to hesitate, to presume to make a remark, to have your delicate scruples? What are you but his agent —a person employed by him? Are you not called upon to show him an obedience equally blind and passive as that which an officer does to his general, or a soldier to his captain?" George did not judge it quite prudent to express to his uncle how much he differed from him on the subject, but he endeavoured to quiet his apprehensions by assuring him that the Duke retained no resentment towards him. Yet in spite

of these protestations M. Saint Firmin was in continual alarm for the next three or four days, fearing that his nephew would incur the minister's anger, and thus all his views be thwarted for ever.

Whatever his relations thought, George was not at all altered: he had still the simplicity to show himself equally punctual and scrupulous in his present employment as he had formerly been while in the office of the Sous-Prefecture, where we have seen he was so inflexible on every occasion except where passports were concerned. Yet for once his probity was put rigourously to the test: his friend Dharville came to request him very earnestly that he would do him a very important favour. The business was to obtain either some promotion or some gratuity for a person who had no just title to it, and to whose application it was impossible to listen without wronging others

who had a more legitimate right. But Dharville interested himself very warmly in behalf of his *protégée*, who was a cousin of one of the opera-girls whom George had seen at the déjeuner. To this request George replied with all possible delicacy that his sense of duty did not permit him to make any application in favour of the party in question. "I am ready to do any thing—every thing for you except an act of injustice."

"And this is a time to preach about your sense of duty when you have to serve a friend!"

George, however, still persisted in his refusal; and the anger of Dharville became more violent. "'Tis very well," said he, "I will apply myself to the Duke, and I suppose you will at least not refuse to second me."

"No, I cannot promise even that: my duty—"

"Phsaw! your duty again:—at least then you will not oppose me?"

"If the Duke asks my opinion on the subject, I shall consider myself bound to speak my real sentiments."

Dharville could endure it no longer: he even reproached George with want of gratitude, and left him, vowing that he would never see him again. Dercy was utterly confounded, nor could he help considering Dharville as very unreasonable and unjust.—"Yet to quarrel thus with my friend—never to behold him more!" this was indeed more than all his firmness of mind could enable him to support. Shocked, therefore, at the frightful idea, he rushed after him to say that he was ready to make any sacrifice that he might demand of him. He had not to pursue him far; for Dharville himself had reflected upon his own harshness, and the unjustifiableness of his request: he felt that George's scruples were well-founded, and that his refusal did him honour; and he wished to recal at once his

unjust request, and his angry words. Without waiting to enter into a mutual explanation, the two friends hurried into each other's arms, and renewed their vows of unalterable affection: and now a contest of reciprocal generosity took place; George insisting upon obliging Dharville's protegée, and Dharville protesting that he should do no violence to his feelings out of a desire to gratify him. In such a debate it was not difficult to see that the cause of integrity must prevail; so much the worse for the interest of the opera-dancer's cousin; but so much the better for the esteem which Dharville entertained towards his friend, and which now became greater than ever.

When the prudent and time-serving Doctor heard of this second piece of indiscretion on the part of our hero, and that he so bluntly refused to oblige the son of the Marquis Dharville, he burst into a violent passion; but was somewhat

appeased when informed by George that in a transport of friendship he had nearly made a sacrifice of his scruples. "'Tis thus that you ought always to act," said this politic adviser. "Mark my words: never refuse to oblige a friend—especially a powerful one who has done much for you already, and may do much more." As to the reconciliation, he listened to that part of the story without evincing any great feeling, and merely contented himself with observing that every sacrifice ought to be made in order to secure such a friend. "It is very singular," thought our hero, "but when I act honourably my uncle blames me, and when I am inclined to act otherwise he seems to approve of my conduct."

M. Saint Firmin who founded such flattering expectations on the credit and influence of his nephew was alternately agitated between hope and fear. In his self-conceit, he flattered himself that he

should be able to manage him just as it suited his purposes; yet he was, on the other hand, thrown into continual alarm when he reflected upon the imprudent openness, the excessive scrupulousness, and that extraordinary delicate sense of honour that governed his nephew, whom he still continued to regard as a mere novice. But it was not long before his attention was directed to what was of still greater personal moment.

CHAP. XIII.

ANXIETIES—PERPLEXITIES—TRANSPORTS.

M. SAINT Firmin's correspondent at Marseilles, who had regularly informed him from time to time as to the state of the Ex-Jesuit's health, now wrote to say, that this venerable personage in whom the Doctor was so greatly interested, had been attacked by a serious illness; that he had been called in as one of the consulting physicians; and that he did not altogether despair of the patient's recovery, although the Doctor must be aware that at the age of seventy-one such an attack could not but be regarded as very ominous. As if too he had been desirous of still increasing the hopes and the anxieties of his brother physician, he added that according to general report,

M. Dercy's fortune amounted to seven million francs.

This intelligence nearly deprived M. Saint Firmin of his senses: notwithstanding his ambition, he was likewise very covetous; or rather, the love of distinction and the love of wealth were balanced in him pretty equally; and he considered fortune as the surest way of arriving at the political consideration to which he aspired. It was now full time to communicate the intelligence to his wife.

"Seven millions!" exclaimed the lady, "what an immense sum! what a mine of wealth!" But the very next moment she could not help making the very same reflection that her husband had done in the first instance; and, considering that this golden heap amassed by the worthy Ex-Jesuit was too precious to be scattered about: "Oh! if it could but be kept entire!—I am always so concerned, when I think that you, my dear husband,

are obliged to submit to the drudgery of a profession, and to keep a *Maison de Santé*.—Seven millions!—But is it then absolutely necessary that your nephews should be informed of this?"

"For God's sake don't distract me," cried the agitated Doctor; "who knows yet whether any of us will touch a single sou of this vast fortune?—There may be a will; or a wife living; he may, perhaps, have been secretly married; or else some old gouvernante, some young mistress, or some vexatious bastard, Madam, may appear, and claim all my dear uncle's property. In one word, Madam, we may be robbed of it—I say, robbed of it all, Madam! You see plainly enough he will neither see us, nor receive any letter from us; we, who are his own natural, legitimate heirs, his next of kin, his very flesh and blood! And then, too, though he has long since quitted the Jesuits, who can tell but that he may still be attached to the order, and have be-

queathed every thing to the reverend fathers of that society? Quickly, let me have a post-chaise—instantly—this very moment—not a minute is to be lost."

"You say very right, Doctor; you must set off directly; your poor uncle is dangerously ill, and will require your professional advice, your consoling presence."

"Very true: those country practitioners are mere ignoramuses every one of them; I don't except one. But hold, has he not threatened to disinherit any of his relations who shall dare to approach him?"

"Ah, what extraordinary provoking fancies these whimsical old people have! Their absurdities are enough to drive one to destraction! Yet could you not go, and either stop at some inn, or take lodgings in the town; or even be at the house of the good gentleman who corresponds with you; and who, although

you seem to entertain no high opinion of his skill as a physician, seems to be a worthy, well-intentioned kind of man? Then you would be on the spot to watch how things were going on, without having any occasion to act contrary to the wishes of your venerable relation."

"If I do go at all I shall certainly do so; yet, if, in spite of all my precaution, it should come to the poor old man's ears that I am actually in the town—"

"Well, then, will it not be better to send one of your nephews, and let him run the risk of incurring his displeasure?"

"Ah! that is no bad idea, faith! Yet, no, no; there is danger even in that. Both La Morinière and Dupré are crafty, scheming fellows, confoundedly covetous, and would stick at nothing to chouse us out of the property and serve themselves only.—As to George—"

"Ah! you may safely depend upon him; he is a young man of such pro-

bity, of such sound principles, he would never attempt to wrong his relations."

"Yes, yes, he is doubtless a very honest fellow ; but may not this singular old uncle of mine take a sudden liking to his nephew, who is almost as great an original as himself. Heavens! what distraction, what perplexity! How to act, what course to pursue? I am absolutely in a fever!" cried the Doctor, feeling his pulse ; then immediately added, "seven millions!"

"Seven millions!" re-echoed his wife; "three hundred and fifty thousand francs a year, at only five per cent!"

Then, after reflecting a few minutes, he added, "I can do no less then speak of it to my nephews; I consider myself bound to do so :—my regard for justice, my attachment to my relations, my sense of honour—besides we must have some moderation :—if you can't have three hundred and fifty thousand francs a year, can't you be very well content

with a fourth of it?—No one can hinder me of coming in for a fourth. And, besides, if there is any will to be set aside, Dupré will be the very man to help us; his services will be indispensable."

"I see, 'tis all very true; 'tis our duty to acquaint them with the whole business. That Dupré would not scruple to hatch some plot against us, if he saw you alone favoured."

"But we have no time to lose."

"Not a single instant."

And the Doctor immediately dispatched a note to Dupré, another to La Morinière, and a third to George, requesting them to come to him immediately, as business of the utmost importance required that all the family should meet that day at his house. Nor did they fail to proceed thither directly. When the Doctor informed them that their great uncle, the Ex-Jesuit, was still living; and communicated to them the letter he had just received from Mar-

seilles, both Dupré and La Morinière seemed to be seized with a sudden ecstasy. How excessive was their agitation, and their transports of joy! Yet they also expressed some resentment towards their uncle for not having before made them acquainted with intelligence of such moment. They were anxious to deliberate upon what was to be done; and every one speaking at the same time offered his own opinion, and opposed that of the rest. George was the only person who remained silent:—"Well," cried La Morinière; "and have you nothing to say? I am quite astonished at your phlegm—your insensibility, in a matter of such immense importance to the family; you must surely feel as much interested as we do?"

"Indeed I do feel interested," replied George; "for I confess I canot hear without emotion, that so venerable a relative as the brother of our grandfather is still living; and that we are

on the point of losing him at the very moment we again hear of him. As to his fortune, is it not his own, and has he not a right to dispose of it as he pleases?"

"What a strange being you are, with your sentiments and reflections at such a time!"

"A fine time truly to moralize!"

"Well, my dear friends," cried the *ci-devant* lawyer, "it is I who must set off; for from the knowledge I have acquired in my late profession, I am more capable than any one else among us of advising our venerable uncle how he ought to dispose of his property."

"I do not see that," said La Morinière; "you will only perplex the worthy old man by your confounded technicalities; let me go: I will advise him faithfully; I will offer him all the consolation that he at present needs. I will represent the family; I, and my son, who is very luckily just arrived from his garrison, and who,

should he find any legacy-hunter besieging the old gentleman, will know how to convince him, by a very summary method, of the injustice of such a proceeding."

"What inconsiderate people you are," cried the Doctor; "one of you wishes to go and disturb the last moments of his poor old uncle, by talking to him of wills and testamentary dispositions of his property; and the other wants to cause some scandalous outrage and disturbance. Both of you equally harass me."

"But something must be resolved upon," said Madame Saint Firmin.

"Yes, but what is that to be?"

After a number of pros and cons, and discussions, and not a few wranglings and disputes, they agreed, as the day was now far advanced, to meet early the following morning. "Let us consult our pillows on the business," said they.—"At all events we have got excellent news!"—"Very excellent news indeed!" reiterated they, rubbing their hands:

and never before in their lives had they been so agitated, so perplexed, and so disturbed.

La Morinière went directly in search of his son, to a *café* where he was certain of meeting with him. Both the father and son walked a long time on the Boulevards, conversing with great earnestness, and sometimes stopping quite still; neither of them caring about the appointments which they had made with various persons. The ex-lawyer vented his agitation in his more than usual petulance and harshness towards his clerks, and even to his clients. The Doctor, who, by the way of calming his agitation, ran out to visit some of his patients, made some pleasant mistakes:—"How many pills am I to take, Doctor?" asked one—"Seven millions!"—"How many ounces of blood must I lose?" inquired another—"Seven millions!" muttered the Doctor. His wife, in the mean while, was dreaming of all the thousand fine things

the Ex-Jesuit's millions would buy; and fancied herself the mistress of a splendid hotel in Paris, and of a chateau in the environs; and that she was the possessor of magnificent equipages and jewels. But George, the only one whose brain was not turned by this sudden prospect of wealth, calmly returned home to finish some writing, that had been interrupted by the family conference.

The following day, long before the hour agreed upon, Dupré and La Morinière were at the Doctor's, who, as Madame Saint Firmin informed them, was gone to the post-office to get, as soon as the mail arrived, any letter that there might be addressed to him from Marseilles. Dupré still appeared very abstracted and absent, La Morinière very full of spirits and gaiety. The former said that he had not been able to sleep during the night, and that an idea had occurred to him, that would doubtless be approved of.

"I will lay any bet," said the other cousin, with an air of exultation, "that it is not better than mine, and I have taken my measures accordingly."

"And pray, what have you done then?, let us hear."

"No; do you inform us first what it is that you propose to do?" And both vowed that they would not explain themselves, except in the presence of the whole family. New altercations threatened to begin; when Dercy arrived, and soon afterwards the Doctor himself, who informed them with tolerable composure, that their uncle, the Ex-Jesuit, was no more.

"How! is he dead!" exclaimed all at the same time.

"Confusion!" cried Dupré, "had you not lost your time in idle deliberation—had we but been informed earlier: but the Doctor must direct the whole family—I ought to have set off for Marseilles yesterday."

"But you forget," observed George, "that you would even in that case have been too late."

"Very true: I really do not know what I say; my head is so confused!"

"And my son, too," said La Morinière, "who has engaged a place in the diligence!"

"How! did you intend to dispatch your son thither, unknown to us? That has a very ill look, Sir, a very suspicious look."

"You will now get a great deal by your prudent stratagem," said the Doctor, "your son will have his journey for his pains."

"Is there then any will left? Are we disinherited? Confound those greedy monks!—Those crafty Jesuits!"

"I have still hopes that things are not altogether so bad as that yet," said Saint Firmin; "all that my correspondent says is that the usual formalities have been ob-

served, and the customary precautions have been taken, and seals affixed: there is therefore no occasion for any precipitation, as nothing can now be done without the consentment of all the parties interested."

"'Tis very justly observed," said Dupré, "and I would advise you, cousin La Morinière, to run and stop your son before he sets off:" a piece of advice that was immediately followed.

Dupré, and the two La Morinières, never failed to be at the Doctor's every day at the hour of the post; and while they were all assembled together the third day after the important news, a packet was put into the Doctor's hands which he eagerly opened, and found that he might very soon expect a detailed statement of affairs from a M. Dubreton, a notary, and the sole friend of the deceased; in the meantime his correspondent assured him, that there was no will, and that, consequently, the whole of the

banker's property belonged to his nephews, or their assigns.

All the auditors, with the exception of George, listened with opened mouths and breathless attention to this important communication, and as the Doctor concluded the last sentence there was a general sigh, as if a single respiration simultaneously agitated the lungs of every person in the room. The Doctor remained with his eyes fixed on the letter, without seeing or hearing any thing else, and quite unconscious of every thing around him. The *ci-devant* attorney, as if seized by a sudden delirium, began to dance about in the oddest manner possible, humming a waltz air and snapping his fingers. "One, two," cried young La Morinière, throwing himself into a fencing attitude and making thrusts at his father, who parried them as well as he could with loud bursts of laughter. George was occupied in assisting his aunt, who had fairly fainted away, and not as our fine ladies do, when they have a mind to display-

their delicate feelings. Quite exhausted by his extraordinary exertions, Dupré sunk down on a chair, when as soon as he could give utterance to his joy, he exclaimed, "Seven millions!—how unfortunate that there are not eight, which would be just two millions a piece."

"What an unconscionable dog you are!" said La Morinière; "for my part, I am perfectly contented—quite contented!"

"What a dash I will make!" cried his hopeful son, "I have always been so plagued to borrow money; now I can have whatever credit I please."

"You are a sad fellow, Antoine!" said his father, still laughing violently.

M. Saint Firmin, who was now recovered from his fit of abstraction, made a pompous and sentimental speech, in which he expressed to his nephews how indécent he considered these manifestations of joy; then he began to make a florid eulogium on the excellent relation they had just lost, who, he observed,

had always been noted in the family for the benevolence of his heart, his steady judgment, and, particularly, his eminent piety. "What do we not owe," continued he, "to the memory of such a man! Not one of us was personally known to him, not even myself; and yet he has proved a benefactor to us all." These well-timed observations produced a general burst of affectionate sentiments:

"What an incomparable man!"

"What an excellent relation!"

"What a pattern of virtue and piety was our uncle the Jesuit!"

The notary's letter corroborated the intelligence already communicated by the Marseilles physician; and put the family in possession of all the details they could wish for; the affairs relative to the succession of their property would be easily arranged, and without any delay, since a few months prior to his death M. Dercy had retired from his banking concern and settled all his pecuniary matters. This letter closed

with the following paragraph, "As to the amount of the property, I can assure you that it is rather more than four millions."

"Four millions!"

"Four, instead of seven millions!"

"How! only four millions," cried all at once these affectionate relations in a tone of as much consternation as if a will had been found excluding them from every thing. But George, who had, till this letter came, some difficulty to persuade himself that they should really inherit any thing, exclaimed, "This is far more than I expected; and I fear the management of so large a fortune will cause me a great deal of trouble."

"My dear fellow," said Dupré, "the best plan for you is not to let it trouble you at all. Here am I quite at your service: permit me to become your agent; for, if you undertake to manage your own affairs, you will soon have to repent it. Let me then manage your

fortune, which I will do with as much care as if it were my own."

"I am really obliged to you," replied Dercy, with extreme simplicity.

"And you too, La Morinière, ought to follow George's example. If you do not lodge your little million in my keeping, what with the rise and fall of the funds—with your ladies, and your fondness for the gaming-table, it will very soon be little indeed."

"Very much obliged to you; I can manage my own money matters myself."

"Oh! never fear, cousin Dupré," said the young soldier, "I think I shall be quite as trust-worthy and clever an agent to my father, as you yourself."

Paying no attention to this sally, Dupré informed them that he was going to start directly for Marseilles, and offered to be bearer of powers of attorney from them; but both the Doctor and La Morinière replied, that they also intended to make the same journey.

Madame Saint Firmin said that she had always had a passionate desire to visit the South of France, and, besides, could not endure the thought of being separated so long from her husband. "What a delightful journey it will be—quite a family party!"

"And for what a delightful purpose!" cried La Morinière. "Ah! how affecting!"

George being confined to Paris by his employment, empowered Dupré to act for him: the others were not long in making their preparations, but set out directly on their journey, having first given directions that a grand mass for the dead should be celebrated in the church of St. Roche, for the repose of the soul of the incomparable Ex-Jesuit.

END OF VOL. I.

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